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by

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Date : 23 April, 1982

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the mechanisms of cultural variation where special emphasis is put on readily analyzable linguistic systems. After a survey of its ethnohistorical background is presented, a small multilingual Metis community of western Canada is placed in its modern context ; then its communicative economy is thoroughly investigated ; and finally a definition of its cultural boundaries is attempted. Through the interplay of this community with its human and physical environment, language and culture are seen as inextricably interwoven ; and their dynamics are explicated in terms of contact, marginality, ethnicity, and self-image. Cultural attrition or deprivation is shown to be an unlikely phenomenon, which fails to be elicited by holistic and flexible ethnographic procedures. This study of the trajectory of a small rural Metis community in space and time eventually leads to a description of multilingual competence as expressive of bio-cultural adaptation.

RESUME

La présente étude porte sur les mécanismes de la variation culturelle, et met l'accent sur l'analyse des systèmes linguistiques. Après avoir passé en revue son évolution ethnohistorique, on présente une petite communauté métisse multilingue de l'ouest du Canada dans son contexte moderne ; puis on donne une analyse complète de son économie communicative ; et enfin on tente de définir ses frontières culturelles. A travers les rapports de cette communauté avec son environnement humain et physique, langage et culture apparaissent inextricablement associés, et leur dynamique fait l'objet d'une explication en termes de contact, de marginalité, d'ethnicité, et de conception de soi-même. On montre aussi que l'existence présumée de phénomènes de privation culturelle ne survit pas à une technique ethnographique souple et holistique. Cette étude de l'évolution spatio-temporelle d'une petite communauté métisse rurale aboutit à un modèle de compétence multilingue reflétant l'adaptation bio-culturelle.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Almost any general anthropological questions can be asked of language, some can be best asked of language, and some cannot be answered without the aid of language (Hymes 1964a : 703).

1. Statement of Problem

1.1. The Community. The primary goal of this study is to provide an understanding of the Canadian Metis through the analysis of phenomena related to the linguistic trajectory and expression of ethnicity of one rural community, known as the Mission Metis. The Mission Metis live on the southern shore of Lac La Biche, in Alberta, 220 kilometers northeast of Edmonton ; they derive their name from the Oblate mission around which they have been gathered since the middle of the 19th century. The "traditional" members of this community -- i.e., those who have not been socialized into post-World War II modernity -- are trilingual (French, English, Cree) and appear to have synthesized the divergent worldviews of the Indian and the Whiteman. Because of this synthesis, few elements of their cultural repertoire are original in themselves ; the Mission Metis' distinctiveness lies rather in the structural relationships obtaining between these elements.

Since the 1960's, however, the community has gradually lost some of this distinctiveness as its internal cohesion disintegrated. While most of the elders are still trilingual, the middle-aged generation is often only passively multilingual ; and the younger generation, reared in a centralized school system and faced with the need to move to job-sites operating in English, is clearly monolingual. The linguistic processes are intimately related to the degree of involvement in the modern world, and are therefore good indicators of acculturation.

1.2. Objectives. The present study purports first to trace the ethno-historical development of the Canadian Metis in general, and the Mission Metis in particular. A description of the elders' triadic communicative economy will then be given, followed by an ethnolinguistic analysis of the whole community. For this purpose, the process of acculturation will be evaluated through patterns of language use and degree of multilingualism ; these phenomena will be found to rest on the interaction of two sets of dependent variables :

(i) specific variables : age, sex, use of stereotypic linguistic features ;

(ii) broad variables : ethnic identity, aspirations, loyalties.

Finally, as Metis-ness is best defined in terms of cultural and linguistic intermixture, acculturation is also studied as correlated with basic worldview and multilingual competence. A broad mapping on an age continuum is possible, but more refined analysis of individual cases seems to reside beyond categorizations by age and sex, and acculturation will thus be eventually correlated to ethnicity and identity.

It is hoped thereby to show how multilingualism and composite

worldview can evolve into single factors, gradually and without cultural loss ; and how the perception of self is the ultimate criterion for a realistic assessment of acculturation. Lastly, this study purports to formulate a model of multilingual competence based on holistic consideration of ethnohistorical, psychobiological, and neurolinguistic factors. This model will constitute a synthesis of the bio-cultural contributions to language production, language maintenance, and language loss, which will have been elicited in the course of the study.

2. Theoretical Bases

2.1. Ethnolinguistics. The concept of ethnolinguistics came to prominence in the late 1940's (Hymes 1974 : 84), and it then fell within the general compass of "anthropological linguistics" or "linguistic anthropology" as the study of the interrelation of linguistic and non-linguistic cultural behavior. Anthropological linguistics covers also ethnoscience, or ethnographic semantics, a discipline which, following the lead of Boas (1911) and Sapir (1921), is concerned with allowing the cultural-linguistic system to generate its own categories of organization and thus effecting an ethnographically valid study of meaning. Anthropological linguistics also relates to sociolinguistics, the thriving rival of, and complement to, generative transformational linguistics.

Sociolinguistics started out in the 1960's as a multidisciplinary field of inquiry with a holistic goal : to wit, the analysis of the social factors underlying language use and language change. Since then, sociolinguistics has become a statistical study of variability which is little concerned with community boundaries, and which subordinates

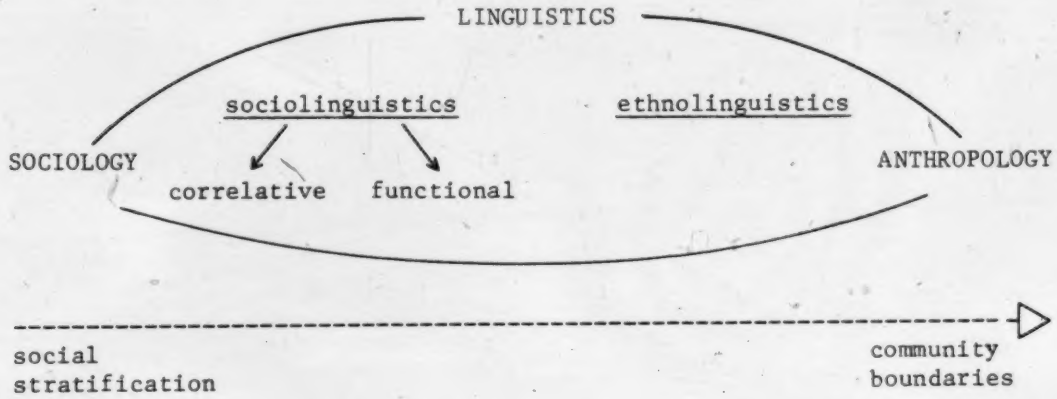
holistic ethnographic investigation to quantitative formality. In other words, the notion of variable developed by Labov and his followers since 1963 has reality for the analyst more than for the community member. Two types of sociolinguistics have emerged, characterized by a correlative and a functional approach respectively (see Dittmar 1976 : 224ff) :

(i) the correlative approach operates with pre-defined social classes, focuses on urban social stratification, and correlates linguistic variables with social parameters largely through the use of sociological procedures of elicitation (questionnaires). This approach is exemplified among others by macro-sociolinguistic studies such as Labov's (1966) New York City survey, and by current sociolinguistic research in Quebec (Thibault 1979). The concomitant emphasis on statistical analysis provides correlations rather than explanations.

(ii) the functional approach operates with a minimum of pre-defined categories, focuses on the speech situation and the content of utterances, and elicits socio-cultural brackets through casual and participant observation. This procedure is applied to smaller groups (microsociolinguistics), and focuses on qualitative descriptions of language function. It is best exemplified in rural sociolinguistic works such as Blom and Gumperz (1972).

It is therefore clear that current sociolinguistics straddles the disciplines of linguistics and sociology. By contrast, ethnolinguistics is founded on linguistics and ethnology. It is concerned with the delineation of community boundaries on an ethnic and social basis ; and with questions of population movements, cultural diffusion, and

marginality. Moreover, ethnolinguistics is psychologically oriented (Lounsbury 1968 : 159) insofar as it takes into account problems of identity as linked with questions of ethnicity ; and it is capable of studying language as a reflection not only of the social, but also of the ethnohistorical context. The study of language in its socio-cultural context, as divided between the fields of linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, can thus be schematized as follows :



The concern for linguistic patterns which underlies these various approaches reveals a common anthropological opinion that language is the "symbolic guide to culture" (Sapir 1929 : 162) ; but the typical goal of ethnolinguistics is best expressed by Whorf's definition of the scope of linguistic study :

> The very essence of linguistics is the quest for meaning ; and, as the science refines its procedure, it inevitably becomes, as a matter of this quest, more psychological and cultural, while retaining that almost mathematical precision of statement which it gets from the highly systematic nature of the linguistic realm of fact (Whorf 1936 : 79).

The duality of patterning which characterizes language at the structural level operates also at the functional level : in the same way as meaningful linguistic units are made up of meaningless ones, paralinguistic information is conveyed by the sum of meaningless isolated cues. Haugen (1956 : 87) has also noted that language "is at once a social institution, like the laws, the religion, or the economy of the community, and a social instrument which accompanies and makes possible all other institutions." This social conception of the place of language in human activities is at the core of sociolinguistic, rather than ethnolinguistic, inquiry.

Operating on a different level, Wilhelm von Humboldt was already expressing a concern about ethnolinguistics in the 19th century when he demonstrated interest in the relationship between language, thought, and behavior (Fishman 1960 : 63) ; Evans-Pritchard's 1956 observation of Zande sanza, a type of discourse filled with circumlocutions and innuendos which reflect the speakers' paranoid worldview and need for hierarchy and smooth social interaction (Evans-Pritchard 1962 : 204-228), is another case of ethnolinguistic research. But Gumperz' (1971c) Indian example -- one of the first studies of the total linguistic economy of a multilingual community, carried out in 1964 -- is already socio-linguistic owing to its overriding concern for social categories.

Anthropologists and linguists have long been divided among themselves as to the nature of the influence of language on mental sets, with some advocating that speech behavior is a determinant of socio-cultural behavior (Whorf 1956, Bernstein 1970), while others maintain the opposite (Gumperz 1971, Fishman 1972). It is my contention here

that ethnolinguistics, and therefore the present study, should view speech behavior and socio-cultural behavior as closely interrelated, with no particular "dominance" operating from one to the other. Furthermore, if, as does Hall (1959), we consider culture as communication (among its members and, globally, with other cultures), then ethnolinguistics appears as a necessary key to the unravelling of cultural patterns.

2.2. Shifts of Paradigms. The anthropological argument for the total incorporation of linguistics into the study of culture because of the cultural importance of language can be reversed : if language is so important, then why not study it as an autonomous phenomenon ? Sapir, Bloomfield, and later Chomsky agreed precisely on this point ; and built a science of linguistics which became increasingly detached from the concerns of adjacent disciplines. The resulting dichotomy has rendered "interdisciplinary" studies such as this one more difficult to achieve, but also more necessary as a step toward the full re-integration of linguistic theory into the field of anthropology.

Chomsky, in particular, succeeded in elaborating one of those paradigms which commit their exponents to "the same rules and standards for scientific practice" (Kuhn 1970 : 11), thereby effectively estranging theoretical linguistics from the occasional fumblings of cultural anthropology toward an understanding of language in its total context. Chomsky was a student of Zellig Harris in the post-World War II years, when American linguistics was more interested in Saussurean parole than in langue (Saussure 1955), and was still uninvolved with the mental processes of language competence. The transition to the new paradigm

was effected by Z. Harris (1951), whose approach Murray (1979 : 133) aptly characterizes as "a plurality of models, armchair theorizing about languages, quasi-mathematics, and total unconcern with cultural phenomena." Chomsky soon bypassed him and rejected the teachings of his elders, thereby trying to capture a new generation of scholars and accomplish his own "scientific revolution." He came close to it, but the break was never clear between Chomskyan and structuralist linguistics ; and the situation did not become so simple that "the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds" (Kuhn 1970 : 150) and drift inexorably apart -- as has so often happened in the physical sciences.

American anthropology had then entered its phase of response to a military-industrial society (Wolf 1970 : 10), and was exchanging the interest in cultural plasticity characteristic of the first half of this century for a preoccupation with the problem of colonial power relationships and their effects on variation. The field was in a state of uncertainty great enough to prevent a complete secession from the burgeoning new linguistics, and some scholars working within the more or less integrated discipline of anthropological linguistics even borrowed from the "revolutionary" dialectical paradigm -- e.g., the dichotomies of competence/performance and deep structure/surface structure. As one pole (the generative school) became more and more engrossed in the interlinguistic study of invariance, and finally the introspective analysis of innate or universal patterns mainly through the medium of English, it was inevitable that the other pole (anthropology-oriented linguistics) should by contrast concentrate its efforts on intralinguistic

variation. After pioneering efforts such as Fischer (1958) or Ferguson (1959), sociolinguistics was born and began to generate several trends.

In a sense, sociolinguistics can be considered a reaction to Chomskyan linguistics, a backlash touched off by the latter's lack of empiricism, excessive theory-building, and reliance on intuition -- which, after all, "is less regular and more difficult to interpret than speech" (Labov 1972c : 199). It must be acknowledged, however, that Chomsky brought about a welcome renewed concern for the mental activities associated with language production, and gave a new start to the science of psycholinguistics already adumbrated by Vygotsky in 1934 (Vygotsky 1962). In fact, many sociolinguists with a correlative bent work within a basically generative framework, which provides them with useful formal devices for the writing of variation rules (see e.g., Labov 1969, Decamp 1971, Bickerton 1971).

Seen in this light, formal theoretical linguistics is only a prerequisite for linguistics sensu lato : e.g., socio- or ethno-linguistics. The enlarged scope can then provide the proof of a hypothesis through the multiplication of data, and thus create a satisfactory inductive-hypothetico-deductive cycle sorely lacking in intuitive Chomskyan linguistics (Derwing 1973 : 226ff). This situation is somewhat similar to that obtaining in the natural sciences, where quantitative psychology and experimental biology stood traditionally in opposition to ethology, with its overriding concern for variance and natural (in vivo) context : here too a synthesis is being effected, and the current tendency is for a more holistic approach (Lehner 1979 : 11ff). Taken together, the generative and sociolinguistic paradigm shifts in linguistics parallel

the passage of archaeology into the "New Archaeology" : in both cases taxonomy gave way to generalizations, and deduction was finally allowed to play its part in order to give direction to scientific investigation (Martin 1971 : passim ; Thomas 1979 : 54). In both cases, too, an obsession for nomothetic processes opened the door to a host of trivialities which seriously impeded progress.

At the present time, the student of language with a holistic inclination faces a threefold dilemma. First, he has available to him a field of inquiry which, alone among the social sciences, has rigorously identified the basic units of its subject matter -- but with so much disregard for context that Hymes (1977 : 52-3) advises that "anthropologists cannot afford to leave language to linguists" (emphasis in the text). Second, the explication of language use creates a need for getting into people's heads, but this must be done in a context the level of which is difficult to define. On the one hand

> the social scientist may be able to reach a point where he can see what is likely to happen next, but he can never be sure. The environment in its largest sense creates the context in which choice is made, but the choice is made by the individual (Leach 1970 : 259).

On the other hand this context of choice seems to have a life of its own, as Sapir noted in 1929 :

> In any given context involving use of language, language response is not to be split up into its elements grammatically nor sensorimotorly but kept as a unit in contextual pattern. Each unit has its own relatively autonomous pattern (Sapir and Swadesh 1964 : 106).

Thirdly, this autonomy is seen by some to characterize structure as well : for instance, Gumperz and Hymes (1972 : 6), building on Sapir's (1933) study of phonemic perception, argue that linguistic structure "constrains and potentially predicts the speaker's perception of verbal stimuli." This conclusion can be extended fallaciously to the structure of social context as well, in which case

> as a result, social context is described in terms which are not part of the grammar of the language -- this is usually left to the linguist (Vanek 1979 : 288).

Such are some of the difficulties which beset the comparatively recent attempt at doing holistic linguistics through the integration of old and modern concepts drawn from various branches of the study of man. We shall see now what results have been obtained.

3. Toward an Integration of Conflicting Patterns

3.1. Invariance and Variation. The present study is founded on the conviction that the two opposite poles of the analysis of language -- theoretical linguistics and socio/ethnolinguistics -- are complementary. It was necessary first to plod through a lengthy phase of studying language in isolation before one could begin to understand its formal mechanisms, in the same way as in mathematics "key variables must be isolated from their contexts to be fully understood" (Denny 1981 : 15). Now that a great deal of work has been done in this domain, one must place language back in its context in order to avoid being caught in an impasse of unrealism.

The structuralist school of thought and its antagonistic offshoots

behaviorist psychology and generative linguistics have traditionally exhibited what amounts to a frenetic craving for idealized simplicity (see e.g., Bierwisch 1973 for a declaration of structuralist principles): the profusion of willful references in Chomskyan literature to Occam's Razor and the non-scientific stubble it is supposed to trim is a case in point. Unfortunately, such armchair idealization is refused validity in the world of *in vivo* studies : this situation is true not only in biology, where "considerable redundancy seems to be required in physiological systems in order to insure that the job gets done" (Derwing 1973 : 244n), but also in linguistic discourse, where redundancy, if inversely proportional to information-content (Lyons 1968 : 85), is at the same time indispensable for effective communication.

Fieldwork in any community constantly demonstrates the "orderly heterogeneity" (Weinreich *et al*. 1968 : 100) of language, and the presence of intersecting diffusional "waves" operating together with a "family tree" type of genetic development. Language may possess a certain autonomy vis-a-vis other cultural phenomena, but it certainly is not spatially or temporally self-contained. One of the great lessons taught by the young discipline of sociolinguistics is that the foregoing structuralist models -- and especially the influential dialectological model -- were needlessly unrealistic in describing language as a homogeneous object (Weinreich *et al*. 1968 : 144). Indeed, variation *must* be integrated into structure in language studies : the relation between the two concepts is one of causality in the perspective of anthropology, of correlation in the narrower perspective of dialectology. More specifically, linguistic diversity has three dimensions :

geographical, social, and stylistic (Bright and Ramanujan 1964). Dialectology, being akin to folklore and human geography, deals almost exclusively with the first of these dimensions, whereas the social and stylistic aspects are considered by sociolinguistics (and, of course, ethnolinguistics).

A dialectological approach has long characterized the subfield of Romance linguistics, with its keen interest in European dialect geography, etymology, and the diachronic relationship between standard and vernacular (Malkiel 1964 : passim). Through surveys based on the comparison of word-lists, dialectology studies variation on a space continuum ; and examines standards and dialects from the perspective of geographical position and diffusion of loan-words and phonetic features. Dialectology incorporates diachrony into synchrony through its concern for etymology and the formation of isoglosses ; but its analyses of linguistic change, although meticulous, are purely descriptive, and have no explanatory power because the discipline never considered seriously the correlation between social and linguistic factors.

Ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics, on the other hand, have gained stature through the study of variation in synchrony and in apparent time : e.g., on the diversity of linguistic forms used in Nootka to talk about people of various established identities, such as children or handicapped persons (Sapir 1915) ; on the differences between men's and women's speech in Koasati (Haas 1944) ; or on the formal/informal distinction of codes often studies by sociolinguists in Western societies (e.g., Labov 1966, Blom and Gumperz 1972). Sociolinguistics

has also had a key role in unravelling the process of linguistic change (see 3.3. below for further elaboration).

However, the crucial difference between the otherwise superficially similar fields of dialectology and socio/ethnolinguistics is that the former studies dialect differentiation within a region, whereas the latter does so within a speech community. Or, in Gumperz' words,

> dialectologists -- and especially those trained in the European tradition -- tend to think of themselves primarily as cultural geographers, folklorists, or social historians. They regard linguistic analysis not as an end in itself but rather pursue it for the information it provides about the history and culture of a region (Gumperz 1971a : 78).

From an ethnographic point of view dialectology, with its language surveys and superficial contacts with informants in their natural settings, was more advanced than structuralist linguistics and its reliance on single informants, often outside their communities. However, as a study of variation dialectology falls short of being an integration of language into more general cultural phenomena ; to accomplish this integration, one needs a perspective placing more emphasis on socio-cultural cues than on etymologies.

3.2. Language in Context. Just as generative linguistics, sociolinguistics is an expression of the structuralist approach. In the 1960's language and society were still separate in linguistic thinking. The emphasis of structuralism on emic studies of structure had led to a neglect of variation, a conception of language structure as autonomous, and finally to Chomsky's idealization of language as a purely cognitive process (see e.g., Chomsky 1968). This assertion was only one of the consequences

of increased specialization in most social sciences as against anthropology, where

> the holistic perspective required prolonged and intensive observation in order to elicit intimate facts and provide awareness of lifestyle -- a practice seldom employed by other social scientists (Voget 1975 : 548).

In the 1960's anthropology began to give increasing consideration to underlying dynamic processes instead of static structures, so that during the same period "a sense of breakthrough was imminent, expressed in talk about the new physical anthropology, the new linguistics, the new ethnography, and the new archaeology" (Voget 1975 : 570). Firth in 1935 had already hailed "sociological linguistics" as the great field for future research (Firth 1964 : 66) ; and it was through the study of bidialectalism and bilingualism (Weinreich 1953, Haugen 1956) that modern sociolinguistics began to take shape -- eventually to converge with sociology in the correlative approach, and tend toward anthropology in the functional approach.

As mentioned above, structuralist studies had already paved the way -- especially with seminal analyses such as that of Sapir (1933), in which phonemic perception is differentiated from objective phonetic status. This stepping-stone in phonemic theory, by showing the locutor's sensitivity to minute phonetic variations which disrupt his perception of his own phonemic system, was at the origin of the important sociolinguistic concepts of <u>indicators</u>, <u>markers</u>, and <u>stereotypes</u> (Labov 1970a). Thenceforth language was seen as possessing both a referential and a non-referential (or expressive) function (Blom and

Gumperz 1972 : 434), and by the 1970's the Chomskyan notion of performance was treated as a sample of the locutor's internalized rules of communicative competence (Sankoff 1974). The anthropological pole of the study of language in context became the point of convergence of scholars united by the respect of ethnolinguistics for fieldwork and holism, but also eager to integrate new methodological concepts such as grammatical variables, componential analysis, etc. This school of thought, dubbed "Ethnography of Communication" (Gumperz and Hymes 1964, 1972), and then "Ethnography of Speaking" (Bauman and Sherzer 1974), purported to concern itself with all the cultural events underpinned by the act of speaking, from Amerindian narrative performance (Darnell 1974) to the rules of telephone conversation in Western society (Schegloff 1972). Ethnolinguistics as a holistic linguistic approach based on ethnographic premisses received its declaration of principles in Hymes (1964b), a programmatic article following the Boasian tradition of viewing language as the least accessible to consciousness of all cultural materials, and therefore the most expressive of essential cultural processes. The need for considerations of both structure and function was met by endowing (ethno-)linguistic theory with the descriptive framework of the then burgeoning ethnography of communication.

However, everything was not perfect in that brave new world of research, and sensitivities were quick to take umbrage at even unwitting provocations. Bernstein (1970), for example, expanded on Whorf's (1939) concern for the influence of language on thinking processes ; and came up with the concepts of elaborated vs. restricted codes, which he considered indicative of some kind of cognitive vigor and deprivation

respectively -- the former characterizing the middle and upper classes and the latter the lower one. The dangerous political potential of such a dichotomy created an uproar, and Bernstein (1972 : 472-3) tried to mollify the impact of his argument by saying that a restricted code may have great intrinsic value, but nevertheless fails to be acceptable to middle-class school standards. It then became unclear which should change, the restricted code or the school standards ? As Burling (1970 : 167) puts the situation, it would have been fairer from the very beginning "to speak of elaborated and restricted extremes of continuously variable speech," instead of only two dichotomous codes.

From a purely linguistic viewpoint, Bernstein also seems to have overlooked the fact that the restricted code, if syntactically and lexically redundant, is nevertheless semantically viable -- while the elaborated code is often syntactically and lexically viable, but semantically redundant and vacuous (see Douaud 1979 : 175, for such an example in French middle-class discourse ; or, for that matter, any run-of-the-mill political debate). However, the controversy over Bernstein's categories has been positive as the indicator of a dynamic field of inquiry trying to determine its units and criteria of analysis.

3.3. Language in Change. Micro-sociolinguistics (the study of social-interactional levels of communication in small groups) soon led to macro-sociolinguistics (the study of social-historical levels of communication in large groups), when it became evident with Labov's (1963) observations on Martha's Vineyard that the non-referential (i.e., socio-cultural) aspect of language is instrumental in the process of linguistic change. Before Labov, Antoine Meillet in the early 1900's

had already understood the potential role of social factors in language change (Labov 1966 : 14-5), and linguistic change in progress had been observed by Gauchat (1905) in the dialect of Charmey (France) ; but the dialectological framework of the period did not permit any meaningful theoretical generalization. Later, Bloomfield was non-committal as regards language change : in his survey of literate and illiterate speech (Bloomfield 1927), for example, he recognizes the structural organization of "incorrect" speech forms and even notices the existence of "hyper-urban" forms (what we now call "hypercorrection") -- but fails to see social variation as a factor of linguistic change. Martinet (1955) tackles the problem in strictly structural-functional terms, and views language at any point in time as a precarious homeostasis between drag-chains and push-chains of phonemic pressure. As for Chomsky and his followers, their diachronic work simply confirms the fact that "though historical linguists over the past 200 years have satisfactorily established many facts of sound change, there have appeared no equally satisfactory accounts of the underlying explanatory mechanisms" (Derwing 1973 : 115). In keeping with generative methodology, Chomsky and his followers put forward a "parent-to-child" model of linguistic change based on the individual locutor, and therefore conformed to the pattern of idealization and introspection prevailing in this school of thought.

Labov (1963, 1966) and Weinreich et al. (1968) placed linguistic change back in the proper context of the peer group and the relative prestige of competing forms ; and shifted the emphasis of study to spontaneous speech as the most relevant category to analyze. Moreover,

as the multilayered structure of linguistic economies was shown to make variation, and hence change, inevitable, the bulk of the study of linguistic change was transferred from the past to the present. From then on, the social matrix was considered indispensable to the study of both language diachrony and synchrony :

> Linguistic and social factors are closely interrelated in the development of language change. Explanations which are confined to one or the other aspect, no matter how well constructed, will fail to account for the rich body of regularities that can be observed in empirical studies of language behavior (Weinreich et al. 1968 : 188).

An explanatory model of language change came out of sociolinguistic research, proposing a culturally normative linguistic behavior putting social pressure on the individual, and thereby making him an instrument in the process of linguistic change, which itself is "regular, but more in the outcome than in its inception or its development" (Labov 1972b : 519). Synchronic variables and socio-cultural continua have since been considered the key to the study of diachronic change. The sociolinguistic approach has thus apparently solved for linguistics the question posed by Bateson (1958 : 283) generally, "How shall we reconcile the contrast which recurs again and again in nature between continuity of change and discontinuity of the classes which result from change ?"

Needless to say, the Saussurean dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony (Saussure 1955) has been dealt a sharp blow by the empirical observation of linguistic change in progress, and the same fate befell Chomsky's (1965) competence/performance dichotomy when sociolinguistics focused its effort on the study of competence in performance. It was

also the end of an era for an historical linguistic theory characterized by the fuzziness of explanations following the quasi-dialectological approach already mentioned. If dialectology possesses "a flair for static ordering of restricted or vast zones, in conjunction with a vivid grasp of the subtle interlocking of historical events" (Malkiel 1964 : 675), it has also produced workers who, like conventional historical linguists, are still operating within a single language family, and are interested in variation and language contact only insofar as these yield lexical and etymological curiosities. This attitude leads them to assume that linguistic change is initiated by "random drift" : such a model is inadequate on both the synchronic and diachronic planes. On the synchronic plane, the shortcoming is caused by an inability to probe the deeper areas of language contact and recognize the existence of multi-level interference, not only in the case of dialects of the same language (as in Labov 1966), but also in the case of distinct languages (as in Emeneau 1964). As regards diachrony, too, the model fails to convey the idea that

> linguistic change begins when the generalization of a particular alternation in a given subgroup of the speech community assumes direction and takes on the character of orderly differentiation (Weinreich et al. 1968 : 187 ; emphasis mine).

Labov's (1963) Martha's Vineyard study demonstrated conclusively that the description of true (i.e., culturally functional) linguistic competence and the adequate explanation of language change require a linguistic model holistic enough to accommodate the social and stylistic determinants of variation in language use. Further research in the ethnolinguistic spirit of Hymes (1964b) also made it clear that both

synchronic and diachronic linguistic investigation must rest on a sound ethnographic basis.

4. The Ethnographic Research

4.1. Methodology. Since Boas, standard anthropological methodology has been characterized by "a natural-history type commitment to field investigation where the essential mandate is to go out and find what is there" (Foster and Anderson 1978 : 216). Once the community is selected, a preliminary organization of variation normally proceeds :

> It . . . becomes the ethnographer's task to discover, in each instance, which features are locally significant for purposes of assigning ethnic labels . . . He must not assume that any single "objective" difference or similarity -- of language, polity, phenotype, or religion -- is significant to all groups, and in the same ways, and to the same degrees (Moerman 1965 : 1220).

In the case of this study, the Mission Metis community was located through the good offices of the Oblate Order of the province of Alberta. My initial goal as a linguist was to test the hypothesis that some Canadian Metis communities have maintained a distinctive French dialect well into the second half of the 20th century under the influence of the co-existing Cree language. This hypothetico-deductive model, when proved correct, was followed out by the determination of significant categories of language function ; consequently the scope of the research expanded and became more anthropological, as it soon was apparent that the community offered a wealth of variables of the type described by Burling (1970 : 102) :

> In one place they may be expressed by the minutiae of phonetic detail, in another by lexical alternatives, and in a third by the choice among entirely separate languages, but some choices of this sort must always be made.

Because of the small size of the population (barely 75 individuals, 18 of whom qualify as representatives of the traditional linguistic economy), it was decided to make no attempt at statistical quantification and to adopt an ethnolinguistic approach : i.e., to concentrate on ethnohistorical, cultural, interactional, and identity factors. Correspondingly, due emphasis was placed on open-ended investigation and participant observation ; as opposed to guided interviews which are carriers of bias, for "the problem is not simply to find answers to questions the ethnographer brings into the field, but also to find the questions that go with the responses he observes after his arrival" (Frake 1964 : 123). This warning is echoed by Black (1969 : 167) : "We assume that whatever we see happening when visiting an alien culture consists of responses, to which we do not yet know the questions" (emphasis in the text). With this attitude, it is normal for the ethnographer of language to be attracted to Swadesh's eclectic field methodology :

> It is desirable that (the researchers) not only note how many in each sex and age groups are bilingual or monolingual in each of the languages, but also report fully on the social pressures and trends, the attitudes taken by different individuals and sectors of the community, current philosophies about the choice of language, correlation with social and economic position, the use of the languages

> in different social settings, special symbolisms attached to the use of language . . . One should also record the judgements, of praise or criticism, that one hears expressed for one or another style of speaking (Swadesh 1948 : 234).

This general program broadly covers the procedures employed in the data-gathering upon which this work is based. Also influential has been Sherzer and Darnell's (1972 : 554) outline of a methodology following that put forward by Swadesh, with the adjunction of typological generalizations such as the study of broad patterns of attitudes toward language in particular cultures, or patterns of speech use characteristic of particular socio-cultural situations. In this regard, extensive use has been made of examples drawn from the anthropological literature or from personal experience, which are presented as illustrations of cross-cultural similarities and divergences.

The observation of change over time has been documented through case studies (elicited in the field, or else available in autobiographical materials such as Campbell 1973, Erasmus 1976, or Dion 1979) ; through local sources of information such as the mission's birth registry and the local vocational center ; and through a selection of the relevant historical literature. In this regard, care has been taken to treat both aspects of Labov's (1966 : 318ff) distinction between <u>real time</u> (as expressed through ethnohistory and language diachrony) and <u>apparent time</u> (as seen through the different age levels of contemporary informants). Finally, recognizing the need to "generate socially conditioned variations in speakers' natural performance" (Gumperz and Hymes 1972 : 24) as one of the basic tasks of both socio-

and ethnolinguistic fieldwork, I had to come to grips with the many problems of participant observation.

4.2. Participant Observation and Its Paradoxes. I introduced myself into the target community through the Oblate Fathers, who agreed to accommodate me and my family at the mission house, strategically placed within a short distance of most of the Metis households. From there I could radiate to meet my usual informants and discover new ones ; and participant observation was effected mostly inside the houses and in Lac La Biche town, as the community has had no communal gathering place since the mission school closed down in 1963. Bearing in mind that "his attention to psychological reality is the hallmark of the anthropologist in contrast to the sociologist" (Wallace 1965 : 415), I carried out interviews so open-ended as to be conversations ; and I never put any constraint on the format of the exchange, as by asking to be left alone with one or more interlocutors. Whoever happened to be there stayed there if he/she wished so, and it often occured that the television set was a competing center of attraction. Sometimes several members of the family participated at the same time, thus creating a lively multilingual and multigenerational exchange generative of noise, but also of spontaneity.

Case studies, autobiographies, and snapshot observations of daily life were thus collected, permitting careful cross-checking and eventually the building of a general ethnographic picture. The typical sociological approach, based on short-term contact with informants in interview situations, was replaced by the anthropologist's prolonged contact with his informants in their natural setting. After the initial

basic fieldwork of summer 1979, repeated trips were made to the community in 1980 and 1981 ; and all observations were recorded as unobtrusively as possible with pocket-book, tape-recorder, or simply reliance on memory. Also, it was considered important to obtain as informants several representatives of less marginal Metis populations living on neighboring settlements, as well as francophone and anglophone Euro-Canadians living near the mission or in the local town : in this way a control group could be established for such matters as linguistic systems and acculturation trajectories.

For this kind of fieldwork, a fair degree of competence in three languages (French, Cree, and English) is required. English presents no problem, as the Metis or Cree dialect of English spoken in Canada is readily intelligible to anyone accustomed to various registers and familiar with Cree. I am well acquainted with Albertan French, a variety of Quebecois French ; and had no difficulty understanding Metis French, as its phonology is not unlike those of Acadian French and some western dialects of France to which I have been exposed as a native speaker of French. Cree is the only language of the Metis triad which required a considerable amount of practical and theoretical study in a comparatively short time, and was consequently a source of slight disruption in elicitation procedures. But even if my Cree had been more fluent, I would still have been ethnically and interactionally perceived as White. As it stood, I appear to have had bilingual, rather than trilingual, status among the Metis ; and therefore my presence may not have touched off as many lexical and morphological interferences from Cree as the presence of a fully trilingual person would. Another skewing factor

which was never obvious but may nevertheless have operated sometimes was the fact that my staying at the mission perhaps associated me with the Church and its normative designs in the minds of my informants.

The "relative ease with which linguistic materials can be segregated for study" (Hymes 1964b : 9) should not blind us to the pitfalls of any ethnographic work, one of which is a lack of flexibility leading to partiality. The background of North American Native field studies is replete with the dissatisfaction and anger informants and communities feel toward ethnographers whose work is not validated by Native consciousness (Deloria 1969, Strynadka 1970). To mitigate this situation, one must learn to be patient instead of zealous, and to wait until the fieldworker's status as an interloper has matured enough for him to be taken in the community's stride. The obvious remedy -- that the ethnographer be a Native himself -- facilitates acceptance by the community, but also raises other difficulties : his informants, conferring on him the uneasy status of being both insider and outsider to the community, will ask him the same type of questions as he asks them, and will involve him more completely in their worldview as the diminished cultural barrier allows for more intimate scrutiny on their part -- a dilemma common in contemporary urban anthropology (Ablon 1977 : 71). The problem of involvement arises as soon as one asks questions in order to obtain information, and thereby stimulates in one's informants an unusual or biased pattern of reflection and criticism (Redfield 1953 : 114). In language-oriented investigations this situation can lead not only to classic cases of hypercorrection, but also to "hyper-incorrection" -- when the informant senses that the investigator

is looking for the unusual (Labov 1971 : 450).

All these difficulties can be subsumed under the Observer's Paradox, which is inseparable from the observation of living organisms and whose effects on empirical linguistic pursuits Labov (1972c : 209) characterizes thus :

> The aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed ; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the identity of the community is disclosed here for reasons of credibility and replicability, and because its members gave me permission to quote their names and most of their statements ; the name of the community and the surnames of its members are therefore given in full. However, I deemed it preferable to associate quotations with first names only, and to use pseudonyms when whole life stories are involved (as in the first section of Chapter 5).

4.3. Scope of This Study. The Mission Metis community provides an interesting area of research because it is a closely bounded ethnographic unit with a known history -- in a sense one of those micro-worlds dear to traditional anthropology, but also permeated by the influence of the larger industrialized world to the study of which modern anthropology has begun to apply itself. Moreover, it presents a uniform age gradation (from infants up to 70-year-olds), and several occupational levels (from welfare allowance through intermittent wage labor to full-scale employment), all of which lend themselves to the establishing of categories mapped on such continua as age range and

degree of acculturation. It is hoped that by isolating the problems of linguistic convergence and compartmentalization in a trilingual situation, and by analyzing them through the perspective of cultural variation, this work will provide an insight into processes of ethno-linguistic change in terms of language proper, interaction, and ethnicity. Linguistic theory can be saved from the danger of speculation only by constant reference to actual language use and neurophysiological constraints on language formation (Whitaker 1971 : 7ff.), and by the incorporation into the scope of inquiry of the "cultural values and beliefs (which) are in part constitutive of linguistic reality" (Hymes 1966 : 116). Only when this is done can we presume to arrive at a holistic model of communication, or, as is the ultimate purport of this work, of multilingual and multicultural competence.

This understanding is what the Metis community has contributed to this researcher. But in an age of increased concern for reciprocal exchange within the ethnographer-informant relationship, one may ask, what did the researcher contribute to the community ? My contribution is very difficult to assess, and rather vain to speculate about -- but this much can be stated : apart from the traditional role of the ethnographer as purveyor of free transportation of goods and individuals, my role has been to give some members of the community a better awareness of their ethnohistory, of the value of their native languages, and of their place in the larger Canadian world. Above all, I have been a good listener -- and this fact is appreciated in any human group.

In the present century many Canadian Metis have slowly reified their ethnicity through such overt markers as the concept of

"biculturalism," and residence on specific settlements as known loci of the ethnic group. The community analyzed here has done so through its constant and (at least until recently) uncompromising affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church. As a result, the local mission and its affiliated Metis have followed a parallel path of development until the 1960's, when the increasing entropy of the former precipitated the societal disintegration of the latter. The present study has caught the community at a point in time when its transient character is evident. The three languages on which its cultural distinctiveness rests are not disappearing insofar as they will continue to be spoken individually (and with minor differences) by neighboring groups -- but the Mission Metis ethnolinguistic system which makes them a coherent idiosyncratic economy is vanishing rapidly.

The scientific criteria hardest to meet in anthropology are falsifiability and replicability. The former is addressed in this study by discussing the methods of analysis, and by relating the consequent findings to the lines of thought of specific authorities and placing them within the compass of cross-cultural comparison. But the criterion of replicability is only partly met : if on the one hand the methods of analysis employed are fully replicable, on the other hand there seems to be a dearth -- not to say an absence -- of similar Metis communities in Canada nowadays (Fr. E.O. Drouin, OMI : p.c.). The potentially similar strategic sites I personally investigated in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1981 turned out to have lost their triadic ethnolinguistic base, or to have disintegrated completely, through the same processes as those we shall presently see at work in the Mission Metis community.

4.4. Outline. The study will proceed as follows :

a) Chapter 2 is a discussion of the concept of Metis as elicited through the ethnohistoric trajectory of the Canadian halfbreeds ; it also situates the Mission Metis within a larger context of population movements and adaptation to modernity.

b) Chapter 3 is an analysis of Metis multilingualism, with particular attention to the linguistic economy of trilingual elders ; Cree is seen as the source of four phenomena of interference affecting French and English.

c) Chapter 4 provides an analysis of Metis linguistic compartmentalization and interactional patterns, and correlates language use with acculturation.

d) Chapter 5 fleshes out the description of the community by giving several examples of life stories and oral narratives, and attempts to synthesize the available data into a definition of Metis identity.

e) Chapter 6 aims at a delineation of Mission Metis culture and worldview, and assesses how representative they are of those of other Canadian Metis ; the general findings of the study are then used to construct a model of multilingual competence operating in a holistic bio-cultural context.

CHAPTER II

ETHNOHISTORY

1. The Canadian Metis

1.1. The Concept of Metis. Both genetic and cultural halfbreeds exist throughout the colonized world ; yet the Canadian Metis, with perhaps the Cape Colored and the Haitians, are unique in that they were able to "successfully assert political and legal rights, for a period at least, against the national government" (Daniels 1979a : 7). Those Metis, who gave Canada her only semblance of an Indian war with the 1885 Riel rebellion, were the result of unions between French voyageurs, coureurs de bois, or traders with Indian or Halfbreed women : "These first 'half-breeds' were literally that, probably the offspring of Frenchmen from Champlain's company, which established Quebec in 1608, and of Indian women among the Huron and Algonquin tribes" (Howard 1974 : 39). The Cree especially were instrumental in these unions : they were first identified by the French as Kristinaux in the 17th century and were trading with them at Lake Nipigon by 1684 (Dickason 1980 : 32).

Price notes that

> differences between the Europeans who arrived in the New World played an important role in determining the nature of Indian-European relations. For example, the French, Spanish and Portuguese were more tolerant than northern Europeans of intermarriage with the Natives.

> Thus, since early historical times there have been significant populations of Spanish-Indian "Mestizos" and French-Indian "Metis", but few British-Indian "Halfbreeds", considering the size of the British population in North America (Price 1978 : 82).

Even though this argument should not be overstated, at the beginning of the colonial period the French do seem to have conciliated the Indians more than the British did : the former were interested in trade, whereas the latter were land-hungry. Moreover, "women were not brought out from France, which gave an added incentive for friendly attitudes" (Eccles 1972 : 11). This mixing of the French with the Indians began in the 16th century about the Gulf of St. Lawrence amid cod fishing and fur trading activities. It was quickly intensified by the policies of the Catholic government in French Canada, which made any Indian who embraced Catholicism into a French subject, "with all the rights and privileges appertaining, including the right to settle in France whenever they wished" (Eccles 1972 : 39). Although few, if any, availed of them, such overtures were conducive to harmonious relationships between the two ethnic groups. Soon the French halfbreeds were the most numerous, and the French word Metis has come to designate all persons of mixed European and Indian ancestry in Canada.

The Metis as a distinctive ethnic group are now largely a western phenomenon, but they were born out of a long period of interaction between Indians and Whites in the St. Lawrence and Upper Great Lakes regions. Trading communities were also found on the periphery of the Great Lakes, as far south as Cahokia (Peterson 1978 : 45), and most of their inhabitants were of mixed race. However, the aggressive

colonization of the American Middle-West in the first half of the 19th century forced those halfbreeds to take refuge among Indian tribes or in the Red River area, more rarely to merge with American Whites. The Metis -- mostly Indian and French Canadian, but Highland Scot, English, and Yankees as well -- survived as a separate group mainly north of the international border. Trading in what are now the Prairie provinces, they "spent a large part of their lives in the northwest, living among the Indian nations, marrying Indian girls, more Indian than French in their way of life and their values" (Eccles 1972 : 146). Assumption of the broker role necessitated a continuous cycle of intermarriage which allowed the Metis to function "not only as human carriers linking Indians and Europeans, but as buffers behind which the ethnic boundaries of antagonistic cultures remained relatively secure" (Peterson 1978 : 55). Many of them were involved in buffalo hunting, an activity which supplied the provisions essential to boreal forest fur trade. They were to be found where the frontier then was, and thus provided Canada with the genuine facilitators of western expansion that the United States always lacked ; it is possible that "without their help the process would have been much bloodier than it was" (Howard 1974 : 40).

The Metis are traditionally portrayed as a marginal society with a distinctive culture characterized by a blend of Indian "reticence" (Preston 1976) and Gallic joie de vivre -- or, to use Giraud's (1945 : 874ff) stereotype, by a temperament reserved first, then congenial and impulsive. All these facets of the Metis' personality made them a colorful people with their own privileged place in Canadian folklore, where they are identified "as much by their blue pantaloons, capot and fiddle, as by their leggings, red finger-woven sash, moccasins, hair

feathers and tattoos" (Peterson 1978 : 53).

Whereas the term Metis formerly characterized "less a racial category than an incipient ethnic group, entry into which could be acquired through marriage and self-designation, as well as birth" (Peterson 1978 : 46), today it is also an administrative -- and in Alberta, a legal -- definition. A Metis is now a person with any degree of Indian blood who is not registered on a reserve. As such, the term Metis covers almost one million people in Canada, as compared to some 250,000 registered Indians. It covers "many non-Status Indians (who) live in Metis colonies on land to which they have no title, and which is not reserved under the Indian Act" (Manuel and Posluns 1974 : 243).

1.2. The Metis Nation. The Metis people are often called "the offspring of the Canadian fur trade". As the European fur traders in the East needed wives, they simply chose them from the tribes whose territories overlapped the trade -- mainly Cree and Ojibwa, both being close relatives within the Woodlands culture of Algonquian-speaking Indians. From the 17th century on, as the fur trade expanded westward, the Metis proliferated in Rupert's Land (see Figure 1) :

> The French colonies of the West, so largely of mixed blood, had begun, and the coureur de bois, restless and lawless, was to give way to the voyageur, an engagé (indentured worker) who toiled at the paddle and the portage but did not winter with the Indians or collect furs (Morton 1969 : 96).

At the same time as they were instrumental in the fur trade and the concomitant geographic explorations, the Metis became semi-settled and some even farmed part of the year ; their homes, grouped around the

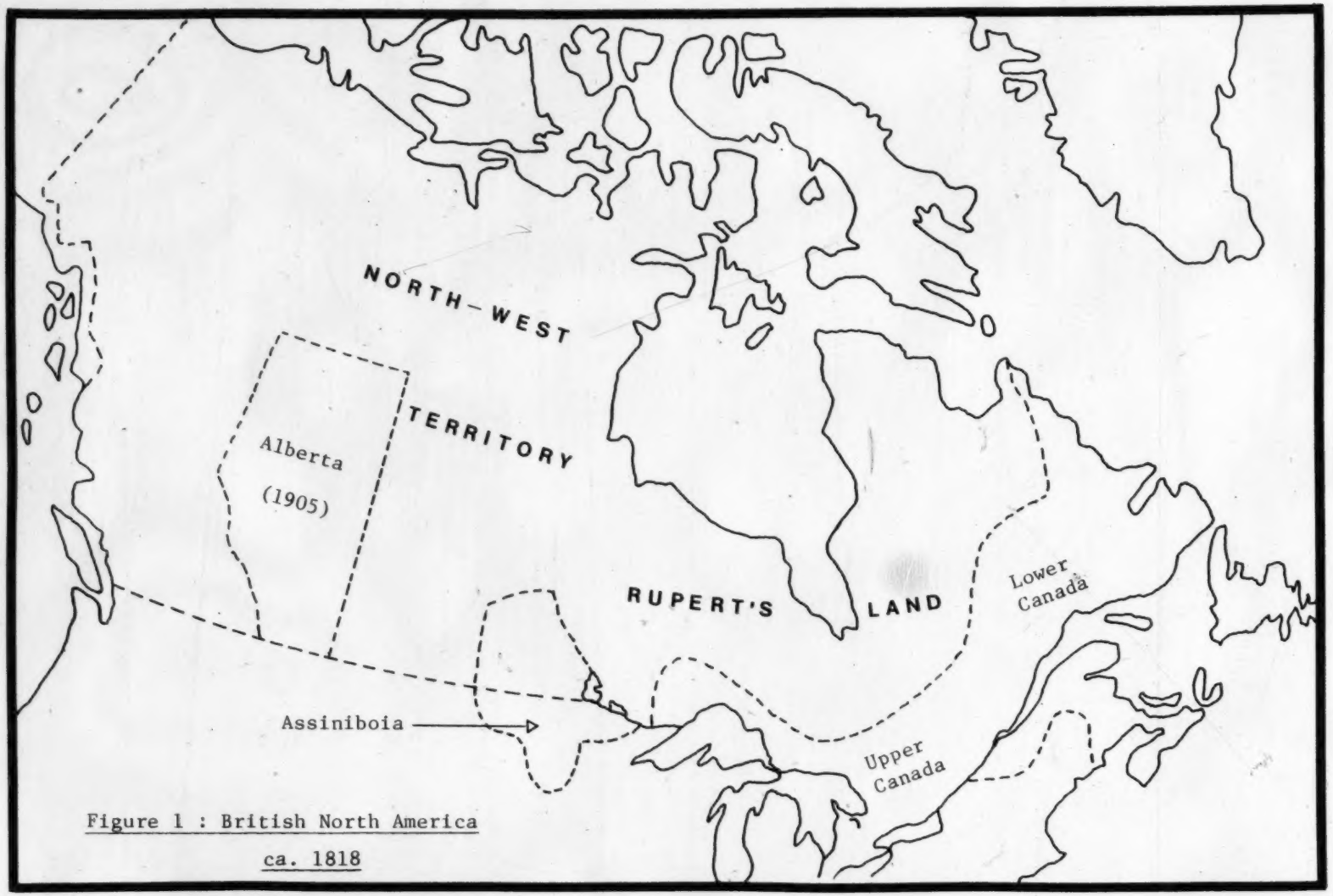


Figure 1 : British North America
ca. 1818

European trading posts, formed the basis for the Metis settlements which would later radiate in the organized buffalo hunt.

In 1811 Lord Selkirk obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company a grant enabling him to settle a number of evictees from the Scottish land clearances on an area of land by the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, which became known as District of Assiniboia (see Figure 1). In 1814 the governor of Assiniboia attempted to forbid the buffalo hunt and limit the pemmican trade -- the very essence of Metis economic and cultural life -- in the hope of boosting the White settlers' economy. Led by Cuthbert Grant, the Metis resisted ; and there followed a period of harassment between the two factions, neither side realizing they were pawns in the war game played by the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company over fur trade monopoly. The White settlers were finally driven away by the Metis after the battle of Seven Oaks (1816) ; however, the conflict went on between the two Companies until their eventual merger in 1821. This operation encouraged the emergence of new Anglo-Saxon settlements on the Red River, so that "the French Canadians were now cut off from the vast spaces of the west which they had always regarded as their country, where their language was the lingua franca" (Eccles 1972 : 248). Also, a number of Metis who so far had had regular employment with either Company were forced to settle or to move farther west.

The Red River settlement thus comprised a semi-nomadic population (Metis, Hudson Bay English, and Indians), and a White contingent of sedentary farmers (Kildonan Scots, French Canadian, and others). The Metis were distinctly predominant (J. Foster 1972 : 96), with activities

including buffalo hunting and employment in the fur trade, as well as horticulture. The task of their education was shared by the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, the former assuming a preponderant role because of its association with the more numerous francophone Metis.

After the Treaty of Paris (1763), religion had become increasingly important to the French Canadians as a social and spiritual solace, all the more so as they found themselves further alienated from the culture of the French Ancien Régime by the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire (Eccles 1972 : 247). The soothing role of the Church was reinforced by the failure of the Patriotes rebellion in the Montreal region in 1837, and very soon French Catholicism began to spread to the remotest regions of the west. Thus it is that the cohesion of isolated Metis communities was largely maintained by Oblate priests and lay brothers, as well as Grey Nuns, of French, Breton, Belgian, or Quebecois origin. The association of the Canadian Metis with the Church began early, and it is no exaggeration to say with Sealey and Kirkness (1974 : 43) that "the Church and its teachings touched every aspect of Metis life."

The Roman Catholic Church had established its first mission in the Red River colony in 1818 (the first settlers of Lord Selkirk were Catholics), and the Protestant Church arrived there in 1820. Apart from their commitment to keeping in check the moral standards of their flocks, the two Churches were strong advocates of farming and related activities. Also the Catholic Church, mostly French-speaking, urged the Metis to preserve their French language in the same way as it later urged the Irish to revive the Gaelic tongue : the ecclesiastic authorities knew

well that cultural separateness tends to strengthen internal social and spiritual bonds. The English Metis were thus allowed to merge into White society to a far greater extent than the French ones, all the more so because of the traditional Protestant concern for spreading literacy.

Recognized as a "majority group and, therefore, socially acceptable" (Sealey and Lussier 1975 : 47) thanks to their essential role in the still little-civilized life of Assiniboia, the Metis throve and expanded, becoming the masters of the plains south of Fort Garry (now Winnipeg) through their buffalo-hunting skills. Around 1850 the total population of the Red River settlement was 5,000, three quarters of whom were halfbreeds. Metis buffalo hunting was an adaptive strategy for the whole settlement, as environmental and technological conditions for agriculture were less than favorable : the hunters thus supplied not only the Hudson's Bay Company, but also the river-lot farmers (Sprenger 1972). This was also the time when the Metis were able to beat an army of several hundred Sioux warriors at the battle of Grand Coteau (1851), and to trade officially with the United States after breaking the Hudson's Bay Company's trade monopoly in Rupert's Land in 1849.

At the same time, their culture was becoming more European under the Church's influence -- except for the Metis "winterers", i.e., those free traders who were operating as far west as "Whoop-Up Country" (southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, and Montana) and were thus dependent on no one (Sharp 1973 : 38). The progress of civilization in the West was felt more strongly from 1857 on, as more White settlers arrived, steamboats appeared on the Red River (supplanting the overland transportation system by cart), and the buffalo herds dwindled rapidly. However, it was difficult for the Metis to understand that their

prosperity was built on precarious frontier conditions -- and was therefore doomed when the system of opportunities vanished. This inevitable change was precipitated by the taking over by Canada of the administration of the Northwest from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869, a momentous transfer that marked the end of two centuries of Company rule in non-civilized Canada.

The Metis, whose interests clashed with those of the alien Canadian government in remote Ottawa, went through a period of insurrections, first in Manitoba (1870), then in Saskatchewan (1885). As Manuel and Posluns (1974 : 22) remark, "it was not even armed resistance, so much as an effort to set up a government to meet the needs that Ottawa so consistently ignored." Following the Metis defeat at Batoche in 1885, their leader Louis Riel, both a skilled politician and an unstable millenarian prophet, was executed (see Stanley 1963 and Flanagan 1979 for two complementary descriptions of Riel's personality). The Metis Nation was thus dead, and its members were considered traitors whose rebellious activities had "frightened away many land-seekers and discouraged western investors" (Sharp 1973 : 315). The Metis proceeded to intensify a dispersion which had begun in 1870 when a number of them, dissatisfied with the outcome of their first insurrection and harassed by the White settlers' hostility, migrated farther west, or south to the United States (especially North Dakota and Montana, where their descendants are still living). Furthermore, small isolated groups had been leaving Manitoba regularly since the 1820's for distant regions in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and ties had been kept between those remote communities and the Red River settlement.

Thus it is that at the end of the 19th century the Plains Metis found themselves without land or status, rejected by the Whites, kept off the Indian reserves, and deprived of their economic and cultural basis : the gregariousness of the large organized buffalo hunt, with its emphasis on disciplined self-sufficiency and cooperation. They had become an ambulatory, rather than migratory, people.

1.3. Passage Into the Modern World. Some Metis integrated into White society and others became incorporated into the Indian reservation system, but these were marginal cases : as a rule, the Metis after 1885 were a semi-nomadic destitute people, and life for them was of the moment. Whole families wandered from job to job, trapping, hunting, and fishing the comparatively depleted areas they covered. They turned fringe dwellers and, gathering outside White communities in shanty towns, or along roads and railways, were then known as the "road allowance people" -- a label which quickly became associated with the traditional "bad image" of a beaten people and connoted alcoholism, fights, prostitution, jail sentences, etc. This state of affairs lasted until well after World War II, when Campbell (1973 : 1-2) notes : "The Halfbreed families who squatted on the road allowance have moved to nearby towns where welfare handouts and booze are handier, or else deeper into the bush as an escape from reality."

The Metis who had been living in isolated rural communities since before the 1885 Rebellion led a secluded existence away from the political and economic turmoil, converted to part-time farming and protected by the Catholic Church, whose influence on many Canadian Native people had been constant since the 17th century (De Trémaudan 1979 : 66 ;

Leacock 1981 : 43-62). As for those who had integrated early into the mainstream of Canadian society, they were especially contemptuous of their less acculturated relatives. The Indians had been granted treaties and lived on reserves where, however unsatisfactory the conditions may have been, they could at least retain their identity and tribal cohesion. The ordinary Metis had none of this -- they were definitely outside the general path of progress, yet they were not marginal enough to be put aside under special status : as a result, "the mental set of the Metis was one of hopelessness, and a feeling that failure would be their lot no matter what efforts were expended" (Sealey and Lussier 1975 : 144-5).

However, in spite or because of this lack of outside support, the Metis maintained the collective vitality that characterized their short-lived Nation on the Red River ; they depended on nobody and thus could retain a semblance of freedom, even though it was dearly acquired. It is possible to differentiate them into four categories, from more modern to more traditional :

(i) those integrated Metis who had settled definitively and had successfully adapted to Euro-Canadian culture ; they had either crossed the color line or become historical Metis, i.e., people proud of their past grandeur but resentful of the "degeneration" characterizing the other Metis.

(ii) those living on the fringe of White settlements : the "road allowance people" described in Campbell (1973), wandering from job to job and destitute.

(iii) those living on the fringe of Indian reserves : a common phenomenon, aptly illustrated by Dion (1979 : 159), then a school

teacher on Kehiwin's Reserve in 1903 : "At the Indian agent's first visit to our little schoolhouse he noted that it was bursting at the seams and I had to confess that a number of children came from Metis parents who were staying in the vicinity. The agent immediately ordered the removal of all halfbreeds from the Indian reserve."

(iv) those living in small isolated communities, with an economy based on fishing, trapping and hunting : this group best preserved the traditional Metis identity and was to provide most of the Metis leaders that arose after World War II.

The reason why the great majority of the Metis did not integrate into White society is simple : they

> were asked to work within an economic structure they poorly understood, with obligations and responsibilities to be assumed that their previous lifestyle inhibited (Sealey and Lussier 1975 : 136).

As voyageurs and meat suppliers, the Metis could only last as long as the frontier lasted : then, their economy would have to be based on more settled activities such as agriculture and fishing. The White man's attempts at operating such a transition generally failed for three reasons : a) the Metis were expected to adapt quickly to the new lifestyle ; b) White speculators often manipulated those holding land scrips into selling them for a pittance (in 1901, a Fort Chipewyan Metis sold his scrip to finance his wedding : Scollon and Scollon 1979 : 40) ; and c) seldom did the White authorities show much understanding or provide thorough aid (the farming implements and seeds were often of inferior grade, or lacking altogether). For example, such an experimental transition failed at St. Paul-des-Mētis (Alberta) at

the turn of the century : the newly created Metis farming colony was unable to expand its land exploitation and produce a surplus ; also, its members became easily discouraged if they did not see immediate results, and were all too inclined to abandon the project -- which is exactly what happened, following which White farmers took over the land (see Drouin 1968 for further details). It was evident that the Metis, if they could be efficient gardeners or "bush farmers", were at any rate unable or unwilling to adapt to the large-scale dominant system ; moreover -- and this is still true for the Mission Metis -- they traditionally preferred stock to crop farming (De Trémaudan 1979 : 385).

The fate of the Canadian Metis thus resembles more that of the American Indian than of the Canadian Indian : the land he lived on was taken, and he was forcibly driven west until eventually he was allowed to open some settlements there. Like the Metis, the American Indians were allotted land (through the Dawes Act of 1887) which they often sold for a pittance, as they were not ready to farm, did not know how to transact operations, and were not encouraged to learn about either (Deloria 1969 : 46-7).

During the Great Depression the Metis were worse off than ever. As frequently happens in the direst situations, it was then that the first modern Metis political leaders began to emerge in Saskatchewan and in Alberta, and these strove to improve the condition of their people. Canadian Metis are still not defined legally by the federal government ; only provincial governments deal with the Metis as such. In this respect, the Prairie provinces alone have concerned themselves with this minority group : Saskatchewan provides its Metis with education and employment

assistance ; Manitoba gives Metis and Indians priority for trapping licences, and purveys Metis communities with special schools geared to the needs of their culture (Rivard and Parker 1975 : V-49). In Alberta, Metis colonies were established under the Metis Betterment Act (1938) ; and a Metis Trust Fund was created to receive royalties for the resources taken from Metis land. Dion (1979 : 185) writes :

> These Metis settlements are not Indian reserves. The administration differs in that the Metis settlements are under a rehabilitation plan aimed at bringing the Metis back to their former independent status and to protect them until such a time when they will be able to handle their own business to advantage.

Even though it is apparent that such a time has come, the White administration is slow to relax its paternalistic "protection," as will be seen below (1.4.).

After World War II and the subsequent opening of the general social attitude toward minorities, the Metis "problem" gained more recognition and local organizations were created. Also, the National Indian Council was founded in 1961, then to split in 1968 into the National Indian Brotherhood and the Canadian Metis Society, the latter including enfranchised Indians. The Native Council of Canada was born in 1971 with the aim of achieving full Native (mixed and full blood) participation in the life of modern Canadian society. Here is a significant excerpt from the Council's Declaration of Rights (Daniels 1979b) :

> We the Metis and non-Status Indians, descendants of the "original people" of this country, declare : That Metis nationalism is Canadian nationalism. We embody the true spirit of Canada and we are the source of Canadian identity.

(...)
That we have the right to preserve our identity and to flourish as a distinct people with a rich cultural heritage.
(...)
That we are a people with a right to special status in Confederation.

This Declaration asserts the old Metis claim that they are the true Natives of Canada : both Indians and Whites are immigrants with only a difference in time between their respective arrivals -- whereas the Metis represent a genuinely indigenous hybrid race. As such they see themselves as a frame of reference in which Canada might find her long-sought identity, thereby transcending the petty factionalism and latent racism that are an integral part of her ethnic mosaic. The Metis are exposed to both Indian and White traditions ; and, given the opportunity, they could "have the best of both cultures," as Albertan Metis leader Adrian Hope likes to put it. The mention of a "right to special status in Confederation" raises perhaps the most thorny issue in a society opposed to special group status of any kind, a position made clear to Canadian Natives by the Trudeau government's 1969 White Paper, which purported to promote integration and was unanimously rejected by Native organizations (Titley 1979). Yet granting the Metis' claim would perhaps amount to the creation of what Manuel and Posluns (1974) call a "Fourth World", a system in which aboriginal and industrial cultures co-exist and learn to interact harmoniously. Some Metis leaders consider their people best equipped for such symbiosis, as they were biologically and culturally born from the contact. This claim to special status rests on the belief that the colonizing process which bestowed guilt on the Whites

and despair on the Indians gave substance to the Metis.

The Metis drew their originality from the fusion of two cultures that formerly were non-static and interacting. Now that one of them has become more static under the repression of the other, it might appear that the way to internal harmony lies in the creation of a new type of dynamism. This is the goal to which Metis leaders have been devoting themselves since the early 1960's, their prime objective being the cementing of Metis unity. This task has been comparatively easy, as a clear sense of distinct political identity has prevailed among them since the days of the Metis Nation. This is quite unlike the Indian situation, where the various tribes found unity in their common Indian-ness only well into the present century and began to develop a pan-Indian identity when they realized it gave Indian groups some survival value.

Unlike the Indians, too, the Metis have been "forgotten" ; because in an industrial society which has some difficulty comprehending social or ideological overlaps and which seeks to impose clear-cut, distinctive labels on all its members, no one knows exactly on which side the Metis are. For some they are europeanized Indians, for others indianized Whites ; from the very beginning, "members of two mutually exclusive groups, they were rebuffed by both" (Howard 1974 : 42). So far the label Metis has hardly been synonymous with achievement, yet it is as such that the people concerned want to be "remembered" and recognized as a single distinct cultural group, regardless of superficial physical or behavioral variation among them. One of the means leading to this end is land ownership. The Metis living outside settlements want to possess some land in order to be safe from exploiters taking over their government-leased

lands. Those who live in settlements view with fear the depletion of natural resources closing in on them, and the expansion of massive industrialization ; many consider that the future of the settlements lies in the development of small industries which will render welfare allowances unnecessary.

Metis unity can be strengthened by a concept of unity that transcends the principle of ethnic distinctiveness and absorbs the various Native peoples who share common difficulties in the face of White society. One such attempt was the creation in 1972 of the National Indian Movement of Canada, which purports to unite Status Indians, enfranchised Indians, Metis, and Inuit. The common political action of all these peoples may well shape the future of White society too, and enable it to achieve finally what should be the goal of its enormous technological effort -- a comprehensive cultural equipoise. Metis architect Douglas Cardinal shares in this vision when he writes : "The measure of a man is seen through the prosperous life that surrounds him, not the inanimate objects he has forcefully acquired" (Cardinal and Melnyk 1977 : 55).

1.4. The Land Problem. One of the basic differences between Native and White worldviews is that the Native thinks he belongs to the land, whereas the White considers the land belongs to him : "many fundamental Indian values are not only incompatible with those of American culture, but work directly in opposition to the principles on which the modern competitive capitalistic order is based" (Ablon 1964 : 297). Much of the failure which characterizes Native-White arrangements can be accounted for on the basis of this difference. The situation is even more

complicated in the case of the Metis because they exhibit a dual pattern of attitudes that White society deems irreconcilable :

(i) on the one hand the Metis share with the Indians a lack of interest for hoarding material wealth, and are therefore viewed as Indians by the Whites. Campbell (1973 : 27) typifies this cultural incompatibility very neatly through a Saskatchewan Halfbreed's view of White settlers just after World War II : "These people rarely raised their voices, and never shared with each other, borrowing or buying instead. They didn't understand us, just shook their heads and thanked God they were different."

(ii) on the other hand the Metis also differ from the Indians by their exuberance and lack of restraint. Campbell again (1973 : 25) : "There was never much love lost between Indians and Halfbreeds. They were completely different from us -- quiet when we were noisy, dignified even at dances and go-togethers."

Even though these differences should not be exaggerated, it is clear from such observations that the Metis have their own distinct values. Metis leader Harry Daniels capitalizes on this fact when he warns : "If the Metis are to found effective organizations, these should have their roots in past traditions" (Daniels 1979a : 27). These past traditions emphasized distinctiveness from both Indians and Whites, and based survival on action and resistance -- a line of conduct that can indeed be readily taken up by any repressed minorities wishing to assert themselves.

The Metis reaction in the middle of this century was timely : "At present they are re-emerging as an ethnic group, with only informal --

not legal -- recognition by the federal government," notes Frideres (1974 : 3). More concerned than the federal government, the three Prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, which include the majority of the Canadian Metis) have launched helping programs carried out with various degrees of determination. The Metis settlements of Alberta are a case in point :

> For many years the Metis in the 2000 square miles of Metis land would be forced to eke out a living through agriculture, trapping, hunting and fishing. The discovery and exploitation of natural gas and oil deposits in the Metis settlements in recent decades promised better days but instead resulted in over $ 30 million in oil and gas bypassing the Metis Trust Fund on its way to the Alberta Heritage Trust, the petro-dollar account of the provincial government (Daniels 1979a : 81).

As in the case of the Indians, this provincial effort to control oil resources, hence political power, has triggered off endless law suits concerning land claims, as the Metis consider it a breach of trust that underground resources are not allocated to them in the same way as surface resources. This conflict has led to a number of ugly actions such as the less than equitable seizure of Metis files by the Alberta government in the Kikino Settlement offices in July 1979.

2. The Mission Community

2.1. The Lac La Biche Area. A number of more isolated Metis communities have been sheltered from the industrial and financial White world. The traditional patterns have endured, and the current process of acculturation is progressing more smoothly. One such community consists

of a cluster of families known as Mission Metis, living on the western shore of Lac La Biche in northern Alberta (see Figure 2). This lake has long been a favorite place for settlements, as evidenced by the prehistoric artifacts discovered there so far. McCullough (1976 : 37) mentions two lanceolate projectile points of the Early Prehistoric period (before 6000 BP), and a variety of point styles of the Middle Prehistoric period (6000-2500 BP). Cordmarked and punctated potsherds date back to the very end of the Late Prehistoric period. Earlier prehistoric materials may relate to Beaver or Sarsi tribes, as the Cree and Chipewyan Indians are early historic (17th century) arrivals in northeastern Alberta. The Cree, in particular, put to use the firearms obtained in the East and pushed the Beaver and Sarsi westward in an effort to monopolize local trapping resources (Bryan 1969 : passim). However, this last movement of the Cree expansion westward was certainly not a spectacular invasion : it is within the realm of archaeological possibility that the Cree had begun to infiltrate into Alberta as early as 1400 AD (Pollock 1978 : 135).

The fur trade soon left its mark with the creation of a trading post by David Thompson on the south shore of Lac La Biche in 1798. This post became part of the waterway system that linked western Canada to the markets of Europe ; and attracted numerous French, Indian and Metis traders. Its prosperity was short-lived, however, as the importance of the "staple fur" trade, soon replaced by the "fancy fur" trade, declined at the beginning of the 19th century. Then the Oblates appeared on the scene.

The Oblate Order (Oblats de Marie Immaculée) was founded in France in 1816, and arrived in Canada in 1841. The Lac La Biche mission (Notre-

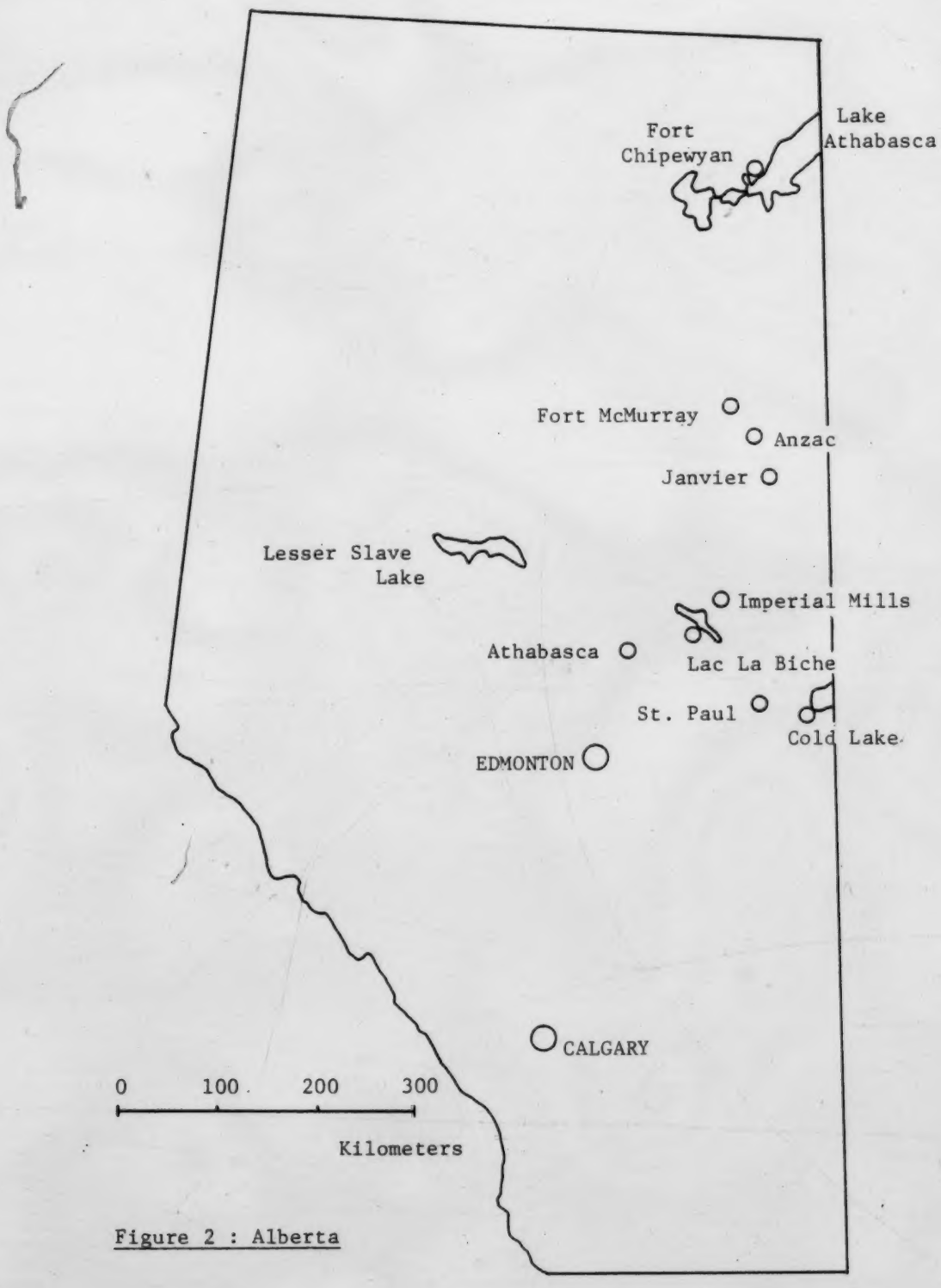


Figure 2 : Alberta

Dame-des-Victoires) was established in 1853 on the west shore of the lake, ten kilometers from the trading post, to serve as "a kind of warehouse for the missions to the North" (Carrière 1979 : 12). It was attended by Cree, Saulteaux, and Chipewyan Indians, and by Metis brought over from Manitoba (Fort Garry, Saint-Boniface, etc) to assist with missionary work. The Oblates soon produced wheat bread and vegetables, which were added to the diet of meat and fish provided by the Metis ; and they built a road between Lac La Biche and Fort Pitt. They were joined by the Grey Nuns in 1862, so that with Metis as the labor force and nuns as teaching and medical staff,

> the mission was a self-sufficient economy, a mini-village with sawmill, church, residences, farms and later a school, convent and warehouse in which goods were stored for distribution throughout the Church's northern regions (May 1980 : 8).

Meanwhile the trading post became a small sub-boreal town serving a vast rural hinterland. It was chosen as episcopal seat in 1875, but lost this title shortly afterwards. At the turn of the century, a flow of immigrants from many parts of the world began to alter the ethnic balance of the region. As a result, Lac La Biche is nowadays a town of approximately 2200 inhabitants of very mixed extraction : anglophone and francophone Euro-Canadians of British, French, Ukrainian, German and Italian descent, as well as Lebanese, Cree Indians, Metis, etc. The language of the town is predominantly English ; the other tongues can be heard in the homes, and -- sporadically -- in the shops.

Misfortunes have struck Lac La Biche repeatedly : a forest fire destroyed most of the town in 1919 ; an attempt at launching a hotel

industry with the McArthur Inn ended in disaster in 1921 ; mink ranching, begun successfully at the time of World War II, was progressively abandoned by the Metis (but not the Lebanese : see Barclay 1968) after 1968, when the tullabee fish (the minks' staple fare) began to die out. However, the paving of Highway 46 between Edmonton and Lac La Biche in the 1970's has transformed the lake area into an important tourist center : lake lodges abound, and campers and anglers converge on the local provincial park every summer. But the townspeople's greatest hope lies with future oil and gas developments at nearby Cold Lake and Primrose Lake. This speculation on a boom has inflated land prices recently, and there is talk of building "an all-weather road linking isolated communities such as Janvier, Heart Lake, Imperial Mills and Anzac with Lac La Biche and the oil and gas development projects" (May 1980 : 9). Whatever happens next, Lac La Biche is a town lying in wait, hoping to seize the opportunity that has so often eluded it.

2.2. The Mission Metis. Eight kilometers southeast of Lac La Biche is the Beaver Lake Indian Reserve (300 Cree Indians), where Cree is the dominant language ; fifty kilometers south of the town lie the two Metis settlements of Caslan (530 people) and Kikino (780), both English- and Cree-speaking (see Hatt 1969 for a description of Kikino) ; and finally, ten kilometers northwest of the town we find the remnants of the Metis colony formerly clustered around the Oblate mission (see Figure 3). Now scattered in 14 households within a radius of several kilometers, this used to be a predominantly French- and Cree-speaking community consisting of five extended families, the order of arrival of which is attested as follows in the birth registry of the Oblate Order : Ladouceur in 1853, Boucher in 1854, Lavallée in 1856, Bourque in 1861, and Huppie in 1872.

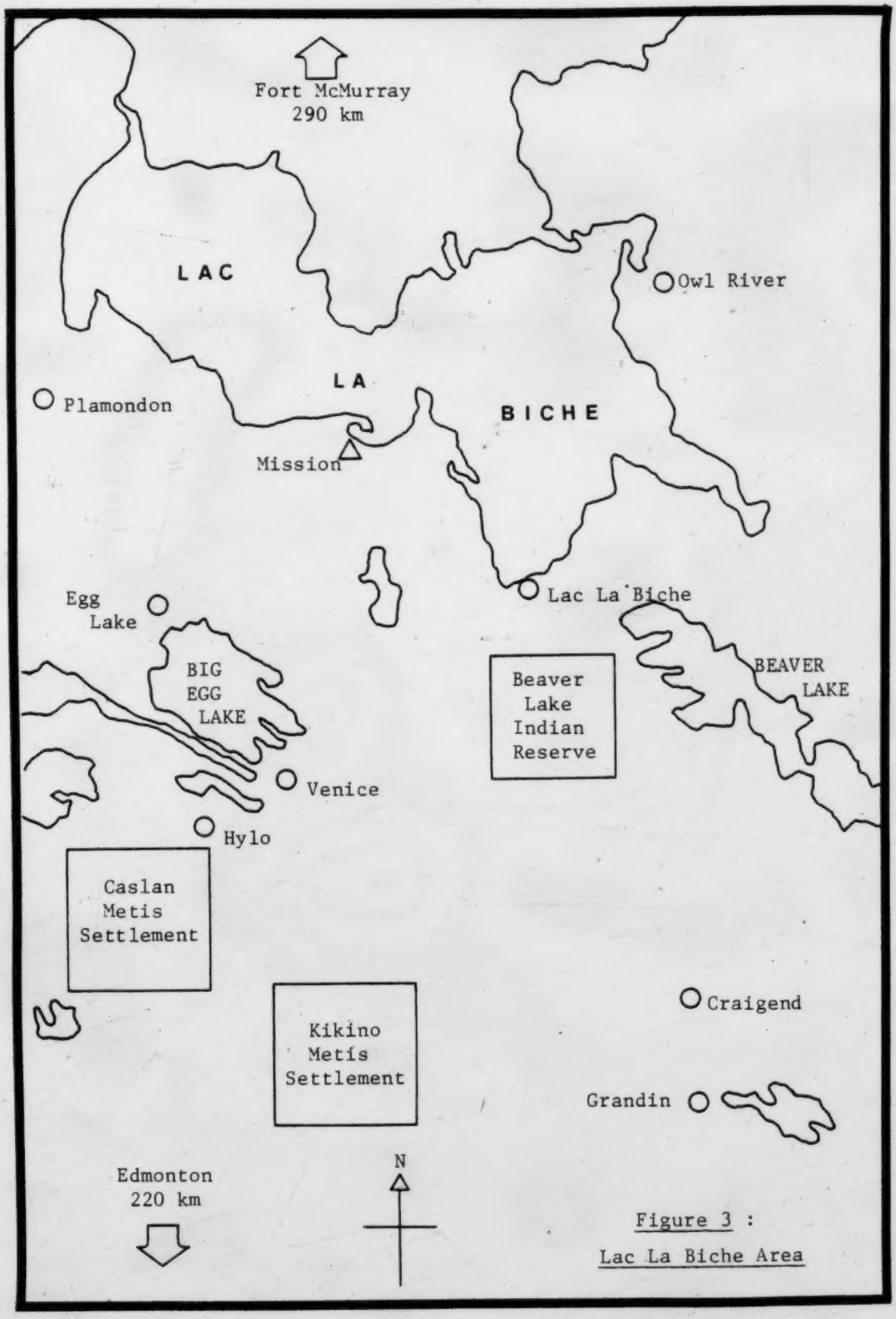


Figure 3 :
Lac La Biche Area

These families, brought over by the missionaries from the Red River (see 2.1. above), focused their subsistence activities on fishing, trapping and hunting ; in the summer, many men "were hired to load the Hudson's Bay barges with food and supply, then float them down the La Biche river to the North" (Lac La Biche 1975 : 12). Of the barges manned by Metis from the Lac La Biche area, Robert Lowie gives the following description, inspired by his 1908 journey on the Athabasca River to Fort Chipewyan :

> The scows were absolutely open boats ; when it rained, we simply got wet. Their holds were large, for in them the Company forwarded the annual provisions for its many posts in the Mackenzie River basin. There were of course no "sanitary arrangements." Each boat was propelled by several oarsmen, who rose from their seats at every stroke, bracing themselves against bales of goods in the hold, while a steersman handled the heavy sweep. Wherever possible, however, and that meant much of the time, energy was saved by just drifting with the current. The half-breeds improved these free periods by playing the hand-game . . . They rowed mainly when making a special effort or when, for some reason, it was desirable to cross over to the oposite bank . . . Everybody called everyone else nistau, which means "brother-in-law" in Cree, the lingua franca of the area (Lowie 1959 : 24-5).

The general pattern of Metis fortunes in the Lac La Biche area after the 1885 Saskatchewan rebellion is familiar : most of the Metis lost their land scrips -- some for a decent compensation, but the great majority for some liquor or a few horses (Giraud 1945 : 1215). The Mission Metis were fortunate enough to escape White speculators, as they

were living on mission land that they did not own. Secluded as they traditionally were, they have always been marginal to the other Metis of the area, who are the descendants of fur trade employees ; they have been less exposed to hostility and racism, but also -- because of the emphasis laid on the non-English aspects of their culture -- they have until recently been prevented from emerging into the mainstream society.

In 1935-36 French ethnologist Marcel Giraud counted 50 Metis families around Lac La Biche (Giraud 1945 : 1261) ; it is not clear whether this number includes the Mission Metis, whom he does not mention. Giraud noted three characteristics, in his opinion applying to the majority of western Canadian Metis :

(i) their cultural isolation : no marriage between Metis and Euro-Canadians had been recorded since 1920 (p. 1272).

(ii) their semi-nomadic lifestyle : people lived in log and mud houses ; net fishing on a private basis was forbidden by law, but they availed of line fishing, which was allowed in summer. There was little hunting and trapping available in the immediate vicinity of the lake, a fact which forced the men to seek intermittent wage labor working on roads or cutting timber. In the summer, the people moved closer to the lake and lived in tents or wickiups (pp. 1261-2).

(iii) their distress : Giraud was appalled by the prevalence of alcoholism ; the spread of prostitution and concomitant number of illegitimate children ; and the high incidence of venereal diseases and tuberculosis. As regards the latter disease, it must be noted that in the 1960's the Albertan Metis were found to be affected by the tubercle bacillus 20 to 30 times more (proportionally) than the Euro-Canadians -- but still significantly less than the Status Indians (Card et al.

1963 : 26).

Even though the Mission Metis shared the poverty of other Metis, they were privileged in so far as they could till the mission land and as their children (up to grade six) had a school close by in the winter. Nevertheless, alcoholism was not unknown among them, and there are now a few reformed elderly drinkers ; also, the fact that some Metis aged 50+ are illiterate suggests that schooling was not always enforced with infallibility by the missionaries. The living conditions of the Metis population in the Lac La Biche area generally improved with the establishing of the Metis settlements between 1938 and 1942. Significantly, the Mission Metis did not join the settlements ; it is not clear whether they refrained of their own accord or at the instigation of the priests.

2.3. Modern Trends. The Mission Metis have seen major changes since the beginning of the 1960's. It was then that the community loosened its bonds with the mission, as the younger generation left in search of jobs while the older members, benefiting from the general rise in affluence of the times, bought larger plots of land where it was available -- often several kilometers away -- and moved from the mission land. This was also the time when Lac La Biche was endowed with a centralized school system which grouped together all the school-age children of the area, whatever their ethnic and linguistic background ; ever since, it has contributed greatly to the diffusion of the English language throughout the area. Better housing has been obtained through the Alberta Metis Association, which provides modern trailers with running water and electricity for just over $100 per month (1980 figure). Typically the old house or shack that was their only accomodation before has not been

demolished, but is used for storage and as a place where one can take a nap in the cool during the hot days of summer.

There are now 14 households, scattered within a radius of some 5 kilometers from the mission, and representing a population barely reaching seventy-five. A precise demographic census is inappropriate here, as this population is essentially fluid and moves in and out of the community according to the whims of employment patterns and traveling plans. As with Australian Aboriginal fringe "mobs" (Sansom 1980), only the more sessile elders constitute a somewhat stable core which can be numbered accurately. Otherwise, the community is larger than its population at any given moment would give one to think. Thus 18 individuals (10 women and 8 men) comprise the generation aged 50^{+} ; approximately 25 people account for the generation aged 30-50 ; and about 30 individuals make up the generation aged 30^{-}. There is a decrease in counting accuracy as one moves down the age scale because younger people are more likely to move to distant job-sites and therefore be absent for longer periods.

The traditional Mission Metis household is composed of a senior member or couple, their children with spouses if any, and the children of the latter. It very often includes one or more unmarried daughters with offspring. There is no stigma attached to illegitimacy -- just a slight embarrassment in front of White interlocutors. As in Indian families the children are a focus of attention of the household. Marriages used to be endogamous within the community, so that any extended family often carries three or four of the five Mission Metis surnames : one of my informants from family A, for instance, is married to a woman from family B, and is related to family C through his sister's

marriage and to family D through his eldest son's marriage. However, exogamy is on the rise among the 30⁻ group, and marriages with English or French Canadians, Ukrainians, and Germans are not rare. Hatt (1969) notes that in the Kikino colony there is factionalism between the extended families but cooperation within them. The same seems to apply to the Mission community, where the more acculturated members of one extended family tend to stigmatize the more traditional members of another, taxing them for instance with being lazy or speaking broken English ; such an attitude is unthinkable within the same family group.

In the past 15 years the community has exploded, as many Metis bought plots of land of their own at a distance from the mission, and the present trend is for households to become nuclear. This change does not seem to affect yet the quality of contacts with close relatives, nor does it undermine the traditional role of the male as delineated by Hatt (1969 : 26) : "Implicit throughout the social structure is the relatively dominant role of the male over the female. Male prestige comes from supporting one's family, being a good hunter or fisherman, . . . and having goods to share and favors to offer."

Until the 1960's one had to be always on the move in search of odd jobs if he wanted to maintain a standard of living barely above poverty level : "Fallait mouver pour vivre," as one elder put it. Among the traditional subsistence activities, fishing was legally restricted and people had to go far afield to hunt or trap game. As a result, there were sometimes shortages of food, when many Metis collected ducks' and grebes' eggs and made doughnuts with skunk fat. Nowadays there is a fishing cooperative in Lac La Biche, composed of 31 Whites and 24 Metis

who devote themselves to commercial fishing and relinquish 2% of their catch to the cooperative. Trucks are available in most families to hunt farther into the bush and visit the trapline more frequently ; in the winter snowmobiles are used to that effect. Finally, many households own a deep-freezer where a year's meat supply can conveniently be stored.

"Indian time" is the rule among traditional Metis : the dates mentioned are vague, appointments are not kept, etc. On the other hand those who stand at the other end of the acculturation continuum are often too busy for anything as futile as meeting an ethnographer. The most striking aspect of Mission Metis working patterns is the adaptation to circumstances : traditional individuals may work very hard during the fishing season and then be idle the remainder of the summer, only to hunt actively in the fall and trap leisurely in the winter. "They are good workers when work is available," remark Sealey and Kirkness (1974 : 117) about the Metis in general : in other words, the White man's work ethic is subordinated to the demands of the seasonal cycle as felt by the Indian. If there is no inclination to overwork, yet the houses and trailers are kept scrupulously clean, the gardens are well tended, and the various tackle is always in working order. Bush life is still the older generation's ideal and the younger one's secret nostalgia ; as one elder told me spontaneously : "C'est ma vie, ça ; c'est ma vie."

Among Mission Metis the community spirit has lessened. One of them, who lives with his married children in one house and two trailers placed side by side, said : " Yeah, autrefois vous alliez dans des parties, des barn-dances qu'ils appellent, là... Y avait du fun. Aujourd'hui c'est tout éparpillé" (In the old days you had parties, what they call barn dances... There was fun. Now we're all scattered). What is left of the

traditional group cohesion is maintained by both men and women. Women meet at the mission chapel every Sunday for a chat after mass ; they also meet in town, where they spend a whole afternoon now and again, driven there by a son or a friend. The men meet on an informal basis through bush activities and sharing, both being prestige symbols which are available only to them. A Metis in the full sense of the word has to be a good bushman. Ideally he owns a truck, a boat, and all the indispensable tackle (nets, guns, traps, snowhoes, perhaps a snowmobile), and contributes to upholding his Metis-ness and that of the group by giving away fish and venison. The importance of sharing was driven home to me on one particular occasion : as I objected to one of my informants (aged 50) giving me what I considered too large a piece of deer liver, his only comment was, "nobody tell me how much meat I give to my friends." Future-concerned thrift and carefully calculated sharing are certainly not well looked upon by the older generation of Mission Metis.

The mission complex is still a focal point for the community, as all the Metis live close to it. Some, who have moved near Lac La Biche town, do not go to church any more because the mission is too far when a car is not always available : obviously, the church in town is not considered an adequate substitute... The Oblate mission is also the place where a number of Metis come to get their water because the water available on their land is not suitable for washing clothes or drinking, or because its level is often too low for easy access in the summer. Some of the individuals who have moved away still rent a plot of land by the chapel, where they keep a garden. The wakes were religious and social occasions that gathered all the community for two or three days,

depending on the season ; people ate a little, drank tea and talked quietly -- unlike the traditional Irish wakes, which were "merrier than a wedding" (Messenger 1969 : 94-5). They too have been given up.

More and more, leisure time is employed as in the average White society of Lac La Biche -- watching television (some have a TV set in their trapline cabin), and going to bars playing modern music (the two fiddlers who used to entertain the Mission community until the 1960's do not play any more). Alcoholic beverages are consumed, but usually with moderation ; many wives of the older generation, perhaps because of the presence of several reformed elderly drinkers, are teetotallers. Camping in the summer is still common -- not out of necessity as in the old days, but simply for the pleasure of living in the bush for a few days or weeks. The need to be on the move is still strong : trucks and cars are used liberally. One elderly couple even go to camp by the priest's house on nearby Beaver Lake Indian Reserve when the trail leading to their house threatens to be impassable, so great is their fear of being house-bound.

From the foregoing it is clear that the Mission Metis community exhibits a complex process of socio-cultural change, the patterns of which will now be unravelled through the analysis of the group's most idiosyncratic attribute : its linguistic economy.

CHAPTER III

A TRIADIC LINGUISTIC ECONOMY

1. Metis Multilingualism

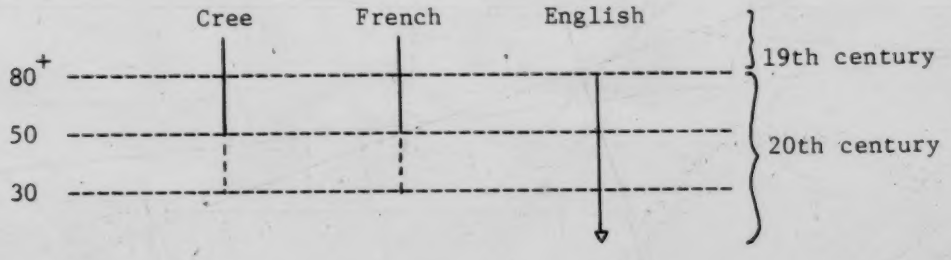
1.1. Synchronic Aspects. The recent alienation of the Métis families from their main social and cultural focus, the Oblate mission, has had a profound effect on the transmission of their cultural values to the younger generation. This fact is epitomized in their current linguistic behavior, of which three general types can be distinguished according to age :

(i) individuals of 50 and over : all the men, and some of the women, are fully trilingual (French, Cree, and English). French is usually the language of the home, except when the wife -- sometimes born from a Cree mother and an anglophone father -- has only Cree and English ; then the couple uses Cree at home. Most of the members of this age group have regular contacts with the two Metis settlements of Caslan and Kikino ; some also have friends and relatives on the Beaver Lake Indian Reserve.

(ii) individuals between 30 and 50 : the men speak English, sometimes Cree ; they understand French well but do not speak it. Very often their wives have no French background, and speak English and perhaps some Cree ; two of them, married to older Metis of the 50^{+} age group, have been taught French by their husbands and speak it with a low degree of fluency.

(iii) individuals under 30 : both sexes have only English. Some may be able to understand a very limited amount of French or Cree. Significantly, the younger generation has been given English first names, whereas the elders' names are exclusively French.

If we take into account the attested fact that the 80^{+} generation -- which has no living representative left today -- spoke hardly any English, the linguistic history of the Mission Metis community in apparent time can be summarized as follows :



My main concern here lies with the members of the 50^{+} age group, who can be considered the last representatives of traditional Metis culture and the last participants in a triadic linguistic economy which, clearly, has been but a transient phase in the history of the community. This group comprises only eighteen individuals of both sexes who regularly use three languages -- French being the community link that differentiates them from the neighboring Indians ; the bilingual (Cree-English) settlement Metis ; and, to no lesser extent, from the other francophones of the area, who acknowledge the Mission Metis dialect as "different."

Bearing in mind that we still do not really know what the limits of compartmentalization are in linguistic convergence, I propose to consider Cree the <u>cement</u> of this triadic economy ; by this I mean that Cree is the historical source of some grammatical peculiarities of Metis French and

English, and tends to attract the other two components to its own structure, while each of them keeps its autonomy for functional reasons. Several observations support this hypothesis :

(i) traditional Metis people are more akin to Indian groups than to White ones in their physical characteristics (Trevor 1953 : 16-7), social organization (Hatt 1969, Campbell 1973, Sealey and Lussier 1975), and worldview (Giraud 1945 : 1275).

(ii) their speech in either French or English is dominated by an intonation contour characteristic of Cree, readily observable on the Kay Visi-Pitch analyser, which provokes a distortion of the normal prosodies of French and English : the former undergoes an intensification of its secondary stresses, the latter a lengthening of its post-tonic vowels, and both exhibit a general lengthening of their unstressed vowels (for further details, see Douaud 1982).

(iii) it is reasonable to assume that when a group exhibits conspicuous features of Indian-ness and is still living in close contact with Cree-speaking Indians, the aboriginal language stands a chance to be primary in whatever linguistic economy the group may have.

However, non-linguistic or paralinguistic factors such as these cannot constitute solid linguistic evidence. For this we need a bridging argumentation which analyzes a few cases of language interference within the triad, with the purpose of inferring their source. Such cases are not difficult to elicit, as

> the study of language in contact confirms the notion that stable long-term co-existence is largely an illusion, perhaps promoted by the existence of relatively stable (or even dissimilating) lexicon

> and morphophonemics (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog 1968 : 158).

In the history of the Mission Metis, Cree and French have co-existed in eastern and then in western Canada for at least two centuries, and English crept into the linguistic economy some fifty years ago : in such a case it would have been abnormal for Cree and French (at least) not to influence one another -- with the greatest amount of interference coming from Cree if we assume it is the primary language of the Metis both cognitively (it is typically the mother's language) and ethnohistorically (in the 18th and 19th centuries the Metis spent most of their time with Indians as cultural and economic brokers).

In my field observations I found that French and English borrowings into Cree were largely lexical, whereas the Cree contribution was mainly phonological and morpho-syntactic. In Weinreich's (1953) terminology, the former are speech interferences, where foreign words or phrases are introduced into the discourse for performing convenience ; the Cree contribution, on the other hand, is a case of language interference, where the co-existing structures are affected. In this way I am concerned here with language interference -- where it comes from and how it contributes to the uniqueness of the linguistic repertoire of the Mission Metis. My examples will show that language interference can be of two types : reinforcing (2 and 3.1. below) and creative (3.2. and 3.3.). In the first case an underlying tendency is generalized and systematized ; in the second a new structure is imposed by the primary language.

1.2. Diachronic Aspects. Trilingual Mission Metis have a dynamic conception of language use, and possess a paralinguistic repertoire ranging from "Indian reticence" to "Gallic extrovertness" according to

sex, personality, and mood. When asked which language they speak more often they invariably answer : "Tout mêlé" (All mixed) -- which response typifies the eclectic aspect of their cultural behavior. However, English is still the tongue Metis elders feel most uncomfortable with, and most of them claim that their parents could not speak it at all. This situation should not be surprising, as it seems to have been the rule for pre-World War I rural Métis ; Howard (1974 : 308), for example, notes about Gabriel Dumont, a Metis leader during the 1870 and 1885 rebellions who by necessity had frequent contacts with anglophones : "He spoke several Indian tongues and French, but he could not read or write, could not speak English and understood very little."

Metis multilingualism has been documented for some time ; here are a few descriptions by frontier people and early travellers :

(i) Erasmus (1976 : 26) evoking a meeting of men at Saddle Lake Crossing in 1856 : "There was a mixture of Cree, English and French among the various groups. The boatmen, apparently tired of their own company, were intermixed with many groups, glad of the chance to speak of other things with the French half-breeds from Lac La Biche."

(ii) the same author (p. 67) mentioning in his account of the 1857-60 Palliser expedition to the Canadian West : "Vital, our buffalo hunter, alone spoke very bad English . . . He succeeded in intermixing French, English and Cree to a degree unequalled by any person of my acquaintance."

(iii) James Carnegie, Earl of Southesk (quoted in Cavell 1979 : 16), observing in the 1870's a Metis encouraging his dogs in this manner : "Fox, ye ould sinner, pren' garde, crapaud that ye aire.

Chocolat ! michastim ! (Michastim, michastimue -- bad dog, bad dogs)."

(iv) That a combination of French, Cree and English was widely used until recently in contact areas of the old fur-trading territory is attested again by Anahareo (1972 : 69-70), who recalls how in the 1920's a very upset Quebec Indian told her and her husband Grey Owl that his wife was dead -- "in French, English, and Cree."

Many other such anecdotal and picturesque vignettes could be quoted. As for the literature dealing specifically with some aspects of Metis linguistic behavior, however, it is very scant and -- to the best of my knowledge -- limited to the following (see the bibliography for complete references) :

(a) Elliott (1886) : Speech mixture in French Canada : Indian and French. This is an early philological account focusing on the history of borrowings between French and eastern Amerindian languages, especially of Algonquian and Iroquois stocks. The author elicits the origin of such Algonquian words as anamens-ikan ("altar," from à la messe) or kopesew ("he confesses," from confesse) ; as well as the Algonquian origin of Canadian French pichou ("wicked creature," from pisew "lynx") or sagamité ("corn porridge," from kisagamitew "it is a hot liquid"). The topic of the article is therefore speech (lexical) interference ; however, the author also mentions briefly Metis syntactic constructions that betray a language interference from Algonquian into French (see 3.3. below).

(b) Lincoln (1963) : Phonology of the Metis French dialect of St. Paul, Alberta. This is a study based on taped conversations with an old Metis man (the last survivor of the short-lived farming colony described in Drouin 1968), in which the author draws a parallel between Standard

and Metis French. The latter is found to exhibit a reduced number of phonemes ; a general lowering and laxing of vowels ; one example of vowel raising (see 3.1. below) ; an almost total absence of schwa ; an assibilation of dental stops before high front vowels and glides ; a frequent neutralization of alveolars /s/ /z/ and palato-alveolars /š/ /ž/ ; and an extensive reduction of consonant clusters. Other remarkable features of the dialect are the paucity of vocabulary, the simplified syntax, and the monotone intonation contour. In his conclusion the author stresses the need for an evaluation of the influence of Cree on Metis French. It must be noted here that such a parallel between Metis and Standard French is only of limited theoretical interest, as no direct contemporary relationship exists between the two : both are simply offshoots of contiguous 17th century French dialects which developed without contact on either side of the Atlantic once the migration was effected (see Figure 4).

(c) Rhodes (1977) : French Cree -- a case of borrowing. This is a brief description of Mitchif, since compounded by further research at the University of North Dakota. Mitchif is a mixture of Plains Cree and French spoken by a Metis community in the Turtle Mountains of North Dakota who call themselves /li šavaž/ ; it is found side by side with English and a joual type of Canadian French. In this case, therefore, one member of the triad is a hybrid : in Mitchif most determiners and nouns are French -- the latter being re-classed along a [+ animate] pattern (see 3.2. below) and receiving optional obviative suffixes -- while the verbs and inflections are Cree. The phonologies of the two source languages are kept apart, one being that of Plains Cree, the other of

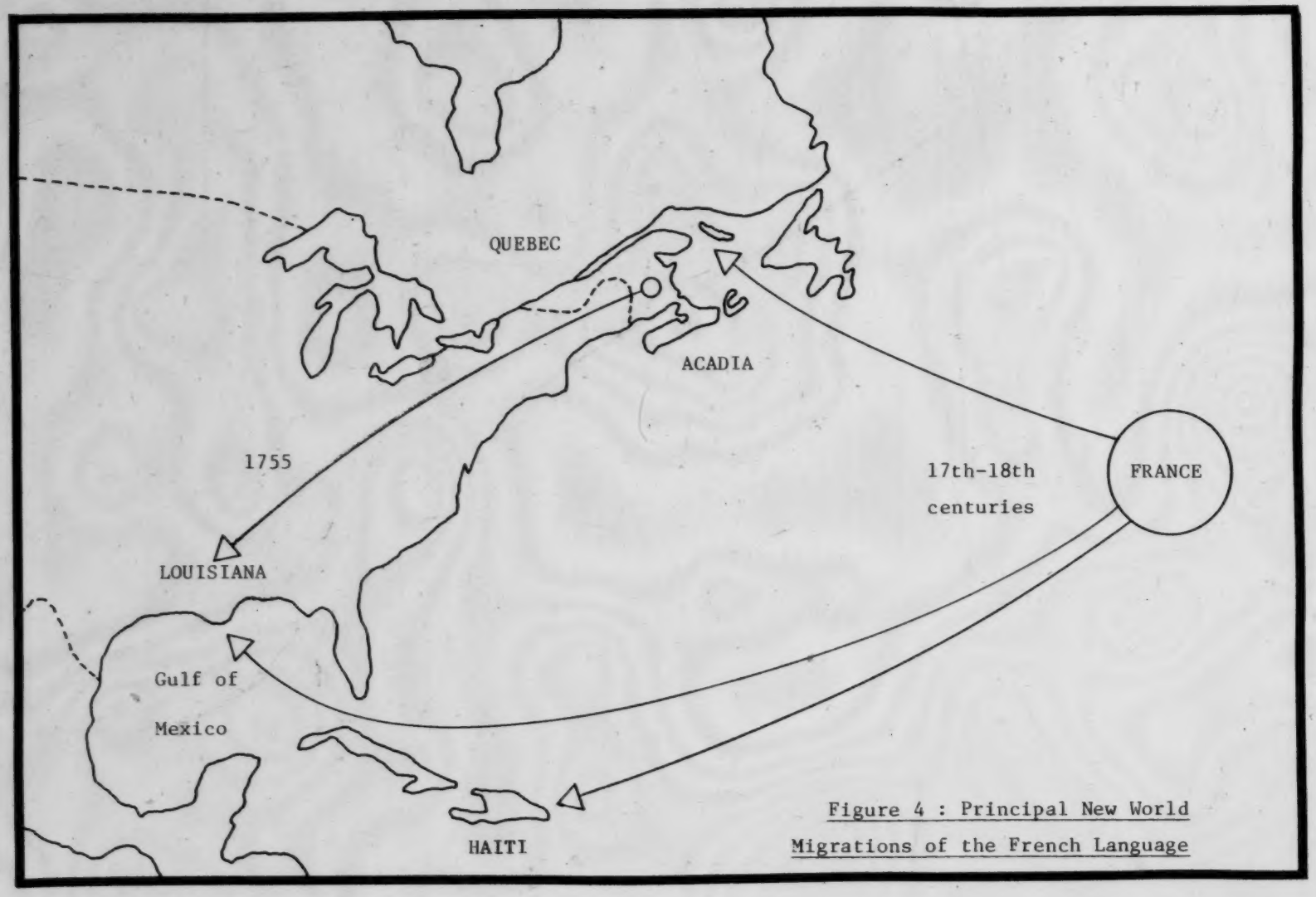


Figure 4 : Principal New World
Migrations of the French Language

a type of French similar to Mission Metis French.

* * * * * * * * *

The following sections review the four outstanding examples which illustrate the influence of Cree on the French and, to a lesser extent, the English of the Mission Metis repertoire. The following points are treated :

(i) phonic interference : allophonic and phonemic restructuring through affrication (2), and vowel raising (3.1.) ;

(ii) morpho-semantic interference : the treatment of gender (3.2.) ;

(iii) morpho-syntactic interference : the expression of possession (3.3.).

These four features are all stereotypes used by the other francophones and anglophones of the area to imitate or caricature Metis speech ; as we shall see, the first two (affrication and vowel raising) concern French solely, whereas the others (gender and possession) concern both French and English. Affrication receives a rather lengthy treatment because it adequately reflects the importance of palatalization in both Romance and Algonquian linguistics.

Most of the symbols used are those of the International Phonetic Association ; however, the following modifications have been deemed convenient :

<u>vowels</u> : [ɪ] = lax /i/

[ʊ] = lax /u/

[ü] = high front rounded vowel (IPA [y])

[ʊ̈] = lax /ü/

<u>glides</u> [ẅ] = high front rounded glide (IPA [ɥ])

consonants [s̆] = voiceless palato-alveolar fricative (IPA [ʃ])

[z̆] = voiced palato-alveolar fricative (IPA [ʒ])

diacritics ~ represents vocalic nasalization

- denotes vowel length in Cree transcriptions

: has the same role in French and English transcriptions

' represents palatalization of preceding consonant

2. An Example : Affrication of Dental Stops

2.1. Description. One of the most characteristic features of Albertan French -- as of Canadian French as a whole -- is its tendency to assibilate dental stops /t/ and /d/ before high front vowels and glides /i/, /ü/, /j/ and /ẅ/ : in this way, for example, tu dis is pronounced [tsü dzɪ], tuer [tsẅe] , tiens [tsjɛ̃], etc. Metis French, on the other hand, replaces the superimposed alveolar (hissing) sibilant by a palato-alveolar (hushing) one, thereby yielding the pair of affricates [t͡s̆] and [d͡z̆] ; the Metis French rule for palatalization is thus :

$$t,d \rightarrow t\breve{s}, d\breve{z} \; / \; -- \begin{bmatrix} -cons \\ +high \\ +front \end{bmatrix}$$

For example : tu dis [t͡s̆ü d͡z̆ɪ], cimetière [sɪmt͡s̆jer], dix ans [d͡z̆ɪ zɑ̃], tuait [t͡s̆ẅe] , and the stereotype word [mɪt͡s̆ɪf] Métis -- where the final segment points to archaic Mestif (fem. : Mestive), a form co-existing with Métis (fem. : Métisse) in some dialects of France between the 16th and the 19th centuries.

(As regards appellations, it must be noted that the Metis also used to be called by the French Canadians Chicots, Bois-Brûlés, etc, terms which may refer either to their dark complexion or to the former coureurs

de bois' habit of acquiring land, stripping it of its timber, and leaving it bare to go on to another plot -- according to Peterson (1978 : 62, note 3). However, Peterson wrongly assumes an indigenous North American origin for Chicot. The term is actually attested in France in the 16th century, of obscure origin ; in French argot this word means "bad tooth" -- perhaps spoiled by the habit of chewing tobacco, or chiquer.)

Palato-alveolar affrication is not a constant in Metis speech. It varies among speakers and within individual registers, ranging all the way from mere palatalization [t'] [d'] (of the Russian and Gaelic type), through the general type just described [t͡š] [d͡ž], to weak assibilation [t^{s}] [d^{z}] -- the latter being found only among the more acculturated Metis or those who have worked a long time outside the Mission community. Whatever its degree, the dominant hushing quality of the affrication is distinctive enough to strike the ear immediately when one hears Metis French for the first time.

Lincoln (1963) found a different situation at St. Paul (Alberta). In the speech of his informant /t/ and /d/ are assibilated as in Albertan French, but rarely affricated to [t͡š] [d͡ž] (pp. 84-5). It must be emphasized that Lincoln had only one informant, aged 83 and bilingual (French and Cree) -- which is in keeping with the pattern of evolution from bilingualism to trilingualism outlined above in 1.1. Moreover, this man lived in a senior citizens home, surrounded by Albertan French- and English-speaking mates ; and he was visited occasionally by a predominantly English-speaking family. The non-Metis influence on his French idiolect is obvious : he aspirates voiceless stops when Mission Metis do not (English influence), has front [ã̃] for Mission Metis back

[ã] (Albertan French influence), and says orignal and Allemand where Mission Metis say moose and German (they may prefer moose because it is a phonetically close borrowing from Cree mōswa ; otherwise, anything or anybody German they may be acquainted with has been introduced into their environment recently and in an English context).

It is therefore not surprising that this much-acculturated informant exhibits the Albertan French assibilation of dental stops ; however, this particular feature should in no way be taken as representative of the speech of the former St. Paul Metis community, especially since Mission Metis palato-alveolar affrication in the same environment is attested elsewhere :

(i) among the Metis of Batoche, northern Saskatchewan (personal investigation) ;

(ii) among the North Dakota Metis (Rhodes 1977) ;

(iii) in southern Alberta, as early as 1860 -- where a French Metis was known to the anglophones of the area as Butcheesh (Erasmus 1976 : xxii, 114), the spelling tch denoting here an affrication in the name Baptiste.

The same phenomenon occurs in some patois of France ; although Ringenson (1922) already noted that it was a rare case of palatalization in her time, the commonest type being what she calls mouillure : i.e., the initial stage in any process of palatalization : t,d --> t', d'. The French patois exhibiting some sort of palatalization are to be found mainly in the west, northwest, and center of France ; the latter region includes Auvergnat French, one of the rare patois showing a systematic affrication of the Metis type (Ringenson 1922 : 86ff, map 7).

Even though the Auvergnat dialect was not exported to Canada, we can assume that the phenomenon of affrication crossed the Atlantic with some western French dialects, in which it was common in the 17th and 18th centuries. Wherever it is found in North America nowadays, it occurs in a very restricted phonetic environment -- except in the case of Metis French. For instance, Lucci (1972 : 34-5) states that the only type of affrication existing in Acadian French, and this only in "the most archaic speech," is t,d --> tš, dž / -- j. In Louisiana French, "before /ü/, /t/ occasionally alternates with /tš/ : tu sais /tü se/~/tšü se/" (Conwell and Juilland 1963 : 57) ; as for voiced dental stop /d/, it is not affected at all.

These phenomena of affrication seem to be the vestiges of a more systematic pattern of palatalization that prevailed in the speech of some groups of French settlers in North America ; among them we still find :

tj --> kj moitié [mwakje]

and k --> tš / -- [-cons, +front] raquette [ratšɛt]

Both types are common enough in Canada ; the former is first attested in France in a14th century text (Ringenson 1922 : 87). The oldest Mission Metis also exhibit this phonetic modification sporadically ; in their dialect, such instances seem to be part of a more general tendency which fronts back stops and palatalizes fricatives and affricates. Thus, in addition to the two examples quoted above we find also :

s --> š les sauvages [lɪ šavaž]

k --> ts Le Calvez (proper name) [tsalvez]

s --> tš d'icitte [dətšɪt]

The palatalization of fricatives and affricates is often accompanied by an assimilatory process resulting in sibilant harmony. In addition to the already quoted Butcheesh [batšiš] (Erasmus 1976 : xxii, 114), we can mention sèche [šɛš] and chasse [sas] (Rhodes 1977 : 21) ; these occurrences are in keeping with the Cree sound system, where the groups [s] [ts] and [š] [tš] cannot co-exist, as they are in allophonic (i.e., complementary) distribution between dialects : e.g., ahtsanis "ring" is [axtsanis] in High Cree and [axtšaniš] in Mission Metis Cree. * [axtsaniš] or * [axtšanis] cannot occur.

Lincoln (1963) does not mention such phenomena in the speech of his Metis informant ; and in Acadia, realizations of the type k,g --> tš, dž / -- $\begin{bmatrix} -\text{cons} \\ +\text{front} \end{bmatrix}$ occur, but are considered very archaic (Lucci 1972 : 96).

From all the evidence presented it can be inferred that the dialectal feature of palatalization was transmitted to the first eastern Metis by their French fathers, and kept both symmetrical and productive by a reinforcing linguistic interference ; whereas in the other francophone groups it underwent structural attrition or disappeared altogether. We must now explain why Acadian francophones, who until recently lived in a state of cultural and linguistic isolation, have gradually lost the feature of affrication so that now it is a characteristic only of the old rural population, while the Mission and other Metis have kept it alive in spite of daily contacts with a French dialect devoid of it. For this purpose a look at the Cree language itself is necessary.

2.2. The Cree Influence. The Plains Cree consonantal system comprises

the ten following segments :

p m w t s n ts j k h

Voicing is not distinctive, and tends to occur in intervocalic position ; stops are unaspirated ; depending on the dialect or sociolect spoken, the fricative and the affricate can range from [s] to [š] and from [ts] to [tš] respectively (or [z] to [ž] and [dz] to [dž] when voiced in intervocalic position). Oxendale (1969 : 66) notes that "Alberta female Cree speakers use [ts] , while Alberta males use [tš] ". Whether this generalization is valid for all Albertan Cree Indians or not, the older Metis women I consulted invariably had [tš] in Cree and French, just as much as any male speaker. In this case, Metis French may have been the instigator of a structural generalization powerful enough to overcome a sociolinguistic barrier in the Cree part of the triad.

The variable pronunciation of /s/ is the result of a merging of Proto-Algonquian *s and *š which is not effective yet in the eastern Cree dialects. Pentland (1978 : 112) notes to this effect :

> Eastern Swampy Cree, i.e., the dialects from Winisk to Fort Albany, retains Proto-Algonquian *š : makošew "he feasts" (< *makwehšēwa), šišip "duck" (< *šiʔšīpa), etc. There are two sets of apparent exceptions. Some words have š where it is not expected, such as šīpīšīš "creek", but they are all cases of diminutive consonant symbolism . . . A few words have s instead of š, but they are due to a dissimilation rule (also found in most Ojibwa dialects) that š becomes s before another s, e.g., kīsisow "he is cooked" (cf. kīšitēw "it is cooked"), osisa "his father-in-law" (< *wešihsali). This rule probably applied in all Cree dialects before they

merged s and š -- the Turtle Mountain creole (Rhodes 1977) has the rule in French loan words even though s and š do not contrast in its Cree words.

This merging of Proto-Algonquian *s and *š into /s/ must have resulted more in a phonetic continuum such as there is today than in the "intermediate sound" posited by Bloomfield (1946 : 87) ; but already the Eastern Cree word lists given by Mackenzie in 1801 and Chappell in 1817 (Mackenzie 1971, Chappell 1817) seem to point to a preference for palato-alveolar fricatives and affricates, at least in the everyday language to which these explorers were exposed.

This issue is only a prelude to the problem of Algonquian palatalization : the evolution of affricates is even more relevant to the explanation of interference in Metis French. In Proto-Algonquian only *θ and *t could be palatalized, in morpheme-initial position before front glides (Piggott 1971 : 12, 19ff), which made "ts a palatal affricate often morphophonemically related to t" (Teeter 1973 : 1151). From the comparative study of Central Algonquian languages, Hockett (1956 : 207) infers that in pre-Proto-Central Algonquian "a single phoneme */t/ had allophones *[t] and *[ts] , the latter occurring only before high front vowels and semivowels." Similarly, reflexes of Proto-Algonquian *θ can be palatalized to /ts/ in Cree dialects, when /t/ is expected : e.g., *θamat- > Cree tsimat- ; in this case they become phonetically merged with reflexes of Proto-Algonquian *ts, e.g., *tsēmāni > Cree tsīmān (Michelson 1935 : 161). As a result, the alternation t~ts is common in Algonquian verb paradigms such as :

Cree nipāt/nipātsik "that he is/they are asleep"

Menomini piat/piatsen "if/whenever he comes"
(Piggott 1971 : 12)

It must be noted also that alternations of the type t∼s are common as well in Cree morpho-syntax : e.g., penāsik/penātihk "come to me/him."

The important point here is that in Cree and other closely related languages the alveolar/palatal phonological space is occupied by unstable segments whose variation corresponds to diachronic, areal, and socio-linguistic discontinuities. The Plains Cree dialect spoken in the Lac La Biche area, which favors the "hushing end" of the phonetic continuum, appears to have contributed by phonetic pressure to the survival of the corresponding affricated allophones of French /t/ and /d/. This case is paralleled by a situation reported by Emeneau (1964 : 645) in India, where bilingualism allowed the pre-Indo-Aryan retroflex allophones to be redistributed as retroflex phonemes in Sanskrit under the influence of Proto-Dravidian retroflex phonemes. This interesting case shows that sound borrowings can occur across the phonetic/phonemic boundary, and substantiates my interpretation that unevenly distributed palato-alveolar affrication of French allophones came to be systematized under pressure from Cree phonemic affrication.

As was mentioned earlier, the Cree spoken by the Metis of Batoche (Saskatchewan) exhibits the same tendency, and so does North Dakota Cree : e.g., Rhodes (1977) transcribes the word for "how" as taniši and that for "hand" as itšitše, where other dialects or sociolects would have tanisi and itsitse respectively. It is also no accident that a recent change in Montagnais, reported by Drapeau (1981), involves the affrication of /t/ and /d/ before /i/ and /j/, probably under the

influence of Quebecois French : but whereas the latter assibilates its dental stops, young speakers of this Montagnais dialect affricate them to [tš] and [dž]. The phonetic pressure thus exerted is all the stronger since the Cree affricate most often appears in environments similar to those which condition Metis French dental stops to affricate, viz., before high front vowels. For instance, in Edwards' (1954) basic vocabulary of over 500 entries, 37 contain the sequence affricate + front vowel, and in 32 cases this vowel is /i/ or /e/ ; similarly, Faries (1938) gives 250 entries beginning with the affricate, out of which 180 are followed by those vowels.

Hockett (1956) already pointed to the attraction between affricates and high front vowels in many Algonquian languages ; and described the varying contrast between /t/ and /ts/ in Fox, Cree, Menomini, and Ojibwa. It appears that in Cree /ts/ predominates over /t/ only before /ī/ ; that the distribution is almost even before /i/ ; and that otherwise /t/ is of much higher frequency. Hockett goes on to say :

> There is an apparently recent alternation between /t/ and /ts/, at least in Plains Cree : in the formation of diminutives an ending containing /s/ is added to the underlying stem ; in addition, most speakers replace a /t/ anywhere in the word by /ts/. This habit is carried over to some non-diminutive forms with an /s/ near the end of the word (Hockett 1956 : 204).

As Weinreich (1953 : 14) puts it : "Interference arises when a bilingual identifies a phoneme of a secondary system with one of the primary system and, reproducing it, subjects it to the phonetic rules of the primary language." In the Metis case, the phonetic environment of French

[tš] has been identified with the phonological environment of Cree /ts/.

3. Three Other Interferences

3.1. Vowel Raising. Another stereotype of Mission Metis French is the allophonic raising of oral mid-high vowels /e/ and /o/. From such recorded examples as marié [marjɪ], blé [blɪ], gros [grʊ], de l'eau [džɪ lʊ], etc., it can be seen that the phonetic realizations of /e/ and /o/ merge with those of /i/ and /u/ -- all the more thoroughly since in Mission Metis French, unlike in Canadian French, there are no higher and lower allophones of /i/ and /u/ : in all cases the place of articulation is [ɪ] and [ʊ], whether the vowel is short or long (e.g., before lengthening consonants such as v, z, ž and r). Lincoln (1963) does not mention the realization of /u/ as [ʊ], but notes that [ɪ] occurs in word-final position only ; Rhodes (1977) describes a raising of both /e/ and /o/ to [ɪ] and [ʊ] in the same phonotactic environment. This finding is in slight disagreement with my own findings for Mission Metis French, where both /e/ and /o/ undergo allophonic raising in word-final position after coronal consonants and glides :

$$e,o \rightarrow ɪ,ʊ \;/\; \begin{bmatrix} -voc \\ +cor \end{bmatrix} \text{ -- } \#$$

The raising of /o/ to [ʊ] can be heard in English too, e.g., I think so [aj tɪŋk sʊ] ; however, I have been unable to determine any systemic distribution for this rare occurrence, and must therefore attribute to it quasi-parasitic status.

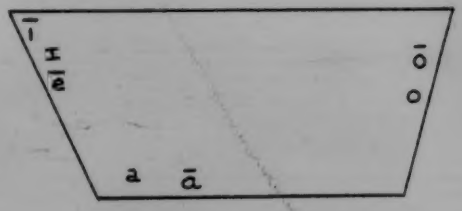
The existence of unraised allophones [e] and [o] points to a phonemic opposition between high and mid-high vowels. However, the incipient merging of the two phonemic zones is so advanced that /e/

raised to [ɪ] has the same effect on the preceding dental stop as an underlying /i/ does : it triggers a palatalizing process which fully assimilates /e/ to the category of high front vowels in such an environment. In this way parenté is pronounced [parɑ̃tšɪ], and de l'autre côté [dlʊt kʊtšɪ]. If Mission Metis French had been allowed to live on, we could have forecast for the near future a phonemic restructuring of the type :

As in all cases of phonemic reduction (even partial, as in this case) significant inter-dialectal misunderstandings may arise. For instance when Boniface (age 65) told me about [sɪ frer, sɪ kʊzɪn], I thought he meant the number six in both cases ("six brothers, six cousins") -- only to discover a few minutes later that the context did not allow for such an interpretation, and that [sɪ] was the possessive ses "his/her." As a second example, when I asked Louis (53) : Est-ce qu'il y a des loups [de lu] par ici ? (Are there wolves around here ?), the answer came rather unexpected : Oh, oui, partout : les rivières, les lacs... Il y a ben de l'eau [dɛ̌ɪ lʊ] à l'alentour, icitte (Oh, yes, everywhere : rivers, lakes... There's a lot of water around here). In this case my Standard French tense [u] in loups had been readily interpreted as /o/ rather than /u/, which shows that the neutralization of the two phonemes at the reception was complete. However, as in the case of [ɪ], this is only a merger of contiguous allophones -- the two underlying phonemes can still be retrieved and opposed on the phonetic surface, according to phonotactic environment and speed of utterance.

Not surprisingly, the Metis seem to cope with the situation very well, and I have never witnessed a case of intra-dialectal misunderstanding so far : such mergers seem to be no more bothersome to them than the phonetic mergers cot = caught, hock = hawk, etc., are in some dialects of American English. In other words, there is no correlation between efficiency of communication and structural status within the dialect. In such cases the speakers find their cues easily and naturally in the context of the speech event ; the stranger, unfamiliar with the context or relying on a contrast present in his own dialect, is likely to be slow in eliciting these cues.

This allophonic variation appears to be conditioned by the collateral use of Cree, whose vowel system is as follows :



A great deal of instability exists among Algonquian high vowels. For example, Pentland (1978 : 111) observes :

> In most northern Plains Cree dialects, *e has merged with *i, as in modern Woods Cree : northern pīyak "one", nīw "four", southern pēyak, nēw (nīso "two" in both). The dialect spoken at Whitefish Lake, Saskatchewan, is reported by Ida McLeod (p.c.) to have interchanged *e and *i : nistīs "my older brother," but nisēmis "my younger brother" (southern Plains Cree nistēs, nisīmis).

The merging of Proto-Algonquian *i and *e into Cree /i/ is paralleled by a similar development in Ojibwa (Bloomfield 1946 : 86), and the

distinction between /i/ and /e/ is obscured in Menomini (Bloomfield 1928 : xiv) ; such merging can even affect vowels of different heights, as in some Montagnais dialects where /i/ and /a/ have undergone neutralization in the last hundred years (Drapeau 1981). In the Lac La Biche area as in other regions of northern Alberta, the Cree phonemes /e/ and /o/ are raised to [ɪ] and [ʊ] respectively (Darnell and Vanek 1973 : 175). An interference from such a phonological pattern can explain why Metis French is apparently unique among the French dialects spoken in Canada for the consistency and symmetry exhibited in raising both mid-high vowels. This feature is unknown to Albertan or Quebecois French, while Acadian French is more partial : /o/ is raised to [ʊ] solely before nasal consonants (a common phenomenon in 16th and 17th century French, and in some contemporary French patois : e.g., see Doussinet 1971 for Saintongeais), whereas in other environments "one is tempted to see a neutralization of the oppositions o/ʊ , because of the uncertain and variable pronunciation of some words" (Lucci 1972 : 38-9). Moreover, /e/ is not affected in Acadian French.

Louisiana French shows a tendency to select the higher vocalic allophones in open syllables : "when the raising tendency is reinforced by assimilation, /e/ may sometimes be replaced by /i/ ; e.g., séminaire /siminar/ . . . In word-initial syllables, unchecked and unstressed /o/ is sometimes replaced by /u/ ; e.g., rôti /ruti/" (Conwell and Juilland 1963 : 113). In contrast with these asymmetrical mergers, the Metis of Batoche (Saskatchewan) exhibit a parallel raising of /e/ and /o/, identical to that of the Mission Metis. My conclusion is that a uni- or bilateral tendency to raise mid-high vowels in some environments was

imported from France with certain western dialects, and was allowed to die out in North America -- except for Metis French, where it has been reinforced by a similar, but more systematic and symmetrical, tendency inherent in some dialects of Plains Cree and other Algonquian languages.

3.2. The Treatment of Gender. A conspicuous example of morpho-semantic influence from Cree is to be found in the ever-present modification of gender in both Metis French and Metis English, owing to the fact that Cree does not have this grammatical category, but a distinction [±animate] : for example, wīyas "meat" is [-animate] (it is dead flesh), while mōswa "moose" is [+animate]. Thus pronominal distinctions of genders in terms of [±masc] forms are simply not relevant to the speaker of Cree ; this is the reason why Metis people interchange freely il and elle in French, and he, she and it in English -- while the other francophones and anglophones of the area do not, but on the contrary use this feature only in a jocular way to typify Metis speech. This characteristic is reminiscent of popular French, where il and elle are sometimes neutralized into [i] (Bauche 1928 : 84) ; however, the Metis case is different in that it does not involve neutralization, but confusion of the pronouns -- a phenomenon frequently observed among speakers of gender-marked languages who have a genderless language such as Persian or Hungarian as their mother tongue.

Examples of this confusion abound in my recordings. For example, Louis (53) : "Ma femme, il parlait Cree : il peut quasiment pas parler ã c't'heure -- il parle rien qu'anglais, vois-tu ?" (My wife, he used to speak Cree : he hardly can now -- he speaks only English, you see ?). Louis again, talking about a rodeo veteran : "Elle en a vu de rudes,

pour sûr" (She's roughed it, for sure). Similarly Marie (62), having asked my daughter's age and having been told "Elle a dix mois" (She is ten months old) with a clearly articulated [ɛ] , said : "C'est-y une fille ou un gars ?" (Is it a boy or a girl ?) -- thereby showing a total disregard of the information concerning sex contained in the pronoun elle (as opposed to il). Very often the Metis even exhibit slips of the tongue involving a confusion in the genders of possessive pronouns, a phenomenon that appears to be exceedingly rare in other dialects of French ; for instance, Louis : "Ma père... mon père il parle ben français" (My [-masc] father... my [+masc] father he speaks good French).

(Incidentally, as Louis' father has been dead for a long time this sentence provides us with a tense simplification very common in Metis French and English, of the type : parlait --> parle, talked --> talk, etc., whose origin may very well lie in a semantic interference from Cree. In this language a charasteristic persists as part of the person even if he is now dead, in which case the absentative suffix -ipan is added to the word representing the deceased -- thereby making tense-marking redundant.)

The same confusion of genders prevails in English, involving three pronouns instead of two. For example, Alexis (68), seeing me strive to open a can lid, commented : "He's stuck, hein ?" ; his wife Mary (46), to whom I had just explained our baby was a girl, marvelled : "Yes, he didn't make noise, nothing." Marie (62), recalling the elder members of her family : "My grandmother, when he died he was a hundred and five." Finally Louis (53), seeing me run up to his trailer, told my wife : "She good runner, him" -- which provides us with yet another example of

interference based on the Cree emphatic construction : miyo-pimipahtāw wīya, literally "well he runs, him," congruent with French c'est un bon coureur, lui.

The absence of sex-based gender in Cree has therefore created a situation where the gender-marked pronouns of French and English are in free distribution, the occurrence of the expected form being either due to chance or to a conscious effort brought about by an unfamiliar interlocutor's voluntary or involuntary feedback (a raised eyebrow being in this respect as efficient in touching off a tentative correction as is a plain question). Interestingly enough, this fluctuation in the use of the pronouns has not been compensated for by the establishing of a $[^{+}_{-}\text{animate}]$ distinction in French or in English, as the North Dakota Mitchif hybrid has done by retaining Cree suffixes (see Rhodes 1977).

3.3. The Expression of Possession. In Cree, possession is expressed as follows : if the possessor is represented by an item with the function of possessive adjective, we have the same word order as in French or in English, viz., [adj + object] , as in o-masinahikan "his book." However, if the possessor is represented by a noun (preceded or not by an adjective), the pattern becomes $[(\text{adj})_i + \text{noun}_j] + [\text{adj}_j + \text{object}]$, as in ki-kosis o-masinahikan "your son's book" (lit. : "your son his book"). This model has been superimposed by Metis speakers on the French and English regular word orders, and we can hear sentences thus construed : "Ma père... ma femme, son père c'était un Boucher" (with the tell-tale slip of the tongue mon~ma again), or "My sister, his boy he's in Fort McMurray." Although such a construction can occasionally be heard in familiar French or English, older Metis use it so consistently that it

may be said to represent the regular possessive construction in Metis speech.

This phenomenon of creative language interference was already noted by Elliott (1886 : 181), who reports eastern Metis syntactic constructions based on an Algonquian model, such as Pierre son livre (for le livre de Pierre "Peter's book"), after Pien o-masinahikan. Lincoln (1963 : 88) mentions such forms as mon père son terrain "my father's land." And more recently Rhodes (1977 : 15) quotes the North Dakota Metis as saying l'homme sa main "the man's hand," and nīya mes poules "my own chickens" ; in the latter phrase (lit. : "me my chickens"), a Cree emphatic construction (nīya nimiseyāsisak) has replaced the French one (mes poules à moi). It is to be noted that other Amerindian languages use possessive adjectives to express genitive relations : e.g., Chinook (Sapir and Swadesh 1964 : 102) and Apache. In the latter case, a similar interference occurs in the speech of bilingual Western Apache when they transfer the native structure onto English : e.g., x bi ɬíí "x his horse" (Keith Basso : p.c.).

The two situations just reviewed -- the treatment of gender and the expression of possession (where in the first case a distinction unknown to Cree is all but ignored, and in the second a Cree construction is superimposed on the secondary languages) -- illustrate the fact that in Cree grammar "morphology is more important than syntax" (Oxendale 1969 : 67). More aptly, in this polysynthetic language grammatical functions are expressed through a complex system of affixes rather than with function-words, and it is only the word sensu lato (especially in verbal form) which is the fundamental unit in Cree grammar : in

Algonquian languages concrete morphemes normally express constructions and relations, and "syntactic and morphological features . . . are commonly in one-to-one relationship" (Teeter 1973 : 1149) -- a trait which makes the Algonquian family comparable to ancient Greek and Latin in this respect. It was thus to be expected that a Cree-dominated linguistic economy involving such analytic languages as English and French would show some fluctuation in the handling of isolated function-words serving a normally rigid Germanic and Romance syntactic arrangement.

The linguistic situation reviewed in this chapter marks the incipience of a convergence which, if allowed to develop, would probably take several centuries to reach the level of structural convergence attained for example by Kannada, Marathi, and Urdu in some villages of India (Gumperz and Wilson 1971 : 154). Why such a development is unlikely to occur will become apparent in the next chapter.

It must be noted that the acculturation model discussed subsequently by no means implies direct subordination of a society to a dominant one. Rather, it is used here as a short-hand term defining a process of culture change with no hardening effect on the notion of community boundary : it must be borne in mind that we are dealing here with a micro-society characterized by fluid interaction with its human environment. At the micro-level of Mission Metis polity, thus, there are no boundaries the trespassing of which would lead to acculturation in the strong sense of the term. Instead, there is fluid diffusion, as none of the three cultures involved in Mission Metis society -- arbitrarily defined as they necessarily are today -- has ever been

alien or dominant.

"Acculturation," for the Mission Metis, is therefore simply an internal shift of emphasis toward one of the three tendencies whose functional pull has applied in the community since the turn of the century. Conversely, on the macro-level of the Canadian Metis in general, acculturation is of a broader kind (planitational) and involves the crossing of sharper boundaries toward a society dominant in terms of socio-economic realizations and exigencies.

In the non-determinist terms of this study, acculturation is thus viewed as transition without necessary loss -- in the same way as biological evolution is seen as modification without necessary improvement in terms of non-Darwinian theory.

CHAPTER IV

FROM LANGUAGE TO ACCULTURATION

1. Contact and Boundaries

1.1. Convergence. In the Lac La Biche region, one older generation of Mission Metis embodies the fusion of three distinct cultural and linguistic traditions into one communicative economy dominated by its oldest contributor, the Cree cultural and linguistic heritage. One of the predictable results of this fusion is linguistic interference, the study of which

> can profit substantially from investigations of multiple language contact, that is, of cases in which the same language has been in contact with two or more others. With the structure of that one language constant, the mutual influence of it on the others, and vice versa, can be described in fully comparable terms, and the likelihood of chance convergence or of similarity due to uncontrollable causes is considerably reduced (Weinreich 1953 : 113).

It was mentioned in the preceding chapter that the influence of French and English on Cree was largely lexical (Weinreich's speech interference), whereas the reverse influence was structural (language interference). As an illustration of the latter, four characteristics of traditional Metis French and English were chosen on the basis of their manipulation as

stereotypes of Metis speech in the Lac La Biche area ; and it was shown that Cree had imposed reinforcing and creative interferences on the secondary languages of the Metis triad, English being less affected than French because it was introduced much later into the repertoire.

Typically, this stereotyping of Metis speech occurs when one mentions the Mission Metis to an anglophone, and more particularly to a francophone, Euro-Canadian who has been in contact with them at some point in his life. I deliberately called these four cases of interference (affrication, vowel raising, gender, possession) stereotypes in preference to indicators (of social or regional distribution, but not of style shifting) or markers (of social and stylistic stratification), because they fall into Labov's (1970a : 298) definition of the category :

> Stereotypes, which have risen to full social consciousness, may be based on older changes which may in fact have gone to completion ; or they may actually represent stable oppositions of linguistic forms supported by two opposing sets of underlying social values.

The Metis stereotypes respond to both sides of this definition : they are the product of an old linguistic evolution due to interference, and stand at present as the expression of ethnic, social and legal singularity -- of the consciousness, on the part of both Metis and non-Metis, that they represent a transient "forgotten" people (Sealey and Lussier 1975 ; Daniels 1979a, 1979b).

Some of the linguistic characteristics reviewed in the preceding chapter were undoubtedly present in certain French dialects imported to North America in the 17th and 18th centuries, and can still be found to

some extent in Acadian or Louisiana French. However, Metis French exhibits them all at the same time in a systematic and symmetrical configuration under the reinforcing influence of the Cree phonetic inventory, and Cree has also been responsible for the creation of two new morpho-syntactic models in both French and English. If, as Scollon and Scollon (1979 : 10) do, we consider multilingual societies as "the normal state of affairs," we are immediately faced with a problem delineated by Sherzer (1973 : 789) :

> One might ask why it is that multilingual situations are maintained over long periods of time, i.e. why it is that some of the varieties in the repertoire are not eliminated, thereby simplifying the language learning process. The reason is social and not linguistic ; i.e. multilanguage usage is maintained in a community because each of the varieties is needed to serve different social functions.

The last statement is validated by the Mission Metis situation, where one generation of speakers became trilingual because it was functionally necessary and socially inevitable : it was the price to be paid for communicating efficiently with many monolingual speakers belonging to three different linguistic groups, of interest to the Metis for a number of reasons (kinship bonds, intermarriage, trade, work, travel, etc). The converging tendency inherent in any hybrid group thus came to be kept in check automatically.

1.2. Compartmentalization. On the one hand traditional Metis speakers until recently had to keep their languages separate in order to communicate with the outside ; on the other hand they offered little resistance to interference, as all their peers were also trilingual and

some of their interlocutors bilingual (Cree-English for the Indians, French-English for the Whites). Since linguistic change or adjustment ultimately starts with the individual, the process of compartmentalization is ontogenetic :

> Another language learned either simultaneously or later duplicates in many ways the functions of the former and involves the alternative use of the same mental and physical organs. The primary linguistic problem is therefore that of keeping the two languages apart (Haugen 1956 : 11).

Whenever this separation fails in the course of the socialization process, there is interference -- a phenomenon that can be characterized as the existence of disparate linguistic elements in a defined social context. The institutionalization of linguistic interference, i.e., the socialization of speakers into it, results in linguistic convergence of many kinds. In northern Amerindian communities such as Fort Chipewyan the phonologies of Chipewyan, Cree and English may undergo parallel attrition tending toward the eventual merger of the sound systems (Scollon and Scollon 1979) ; in India, co-existent unrelated languages such as Kannada and Marathi may converge into identical constituent structures rendering code storage and switching easier and fitter for ready translatability (Gumperz 1971b). As for the Mission Metis, they have inherited a moderate amount of convergence ; but, no purists where language is concerned, they do not operate any conscious compartmentalization.

Interference is therefore a double-edged weapon. In one respect it facilitates multilingualism, if we believe with Weinreich (1953 : 8) that

"inasmuch as a language is a system of oppositions, a partial identification of the systems is to the bilingual a reduction of his linguistic burden." But multilingualism can also carry harmony between co-existing languages a trifle too far ; and, if unchecked by communicative necessities, it can create hybrids which cannot serve the same broad purposes of interaction as do languages kept separate. This development is what seems to have happened to the Plains Cree dialect of the North Dakota Metis, which, having no communicative role to fill because of its geographical isolation from other Cree dialects, was in a short time hybridized with Metis French, thus becoming the Mitchif described by Rhodes (1977). This situation can be contrasted with that obtaining in most of India, where language borrowings are considerable but "the need for maintenance of at least some symbols of role specificity acts as a deterrent to excessive borrowing and thus prevents complete merger of codes" (Gumperz 1971c : 208).

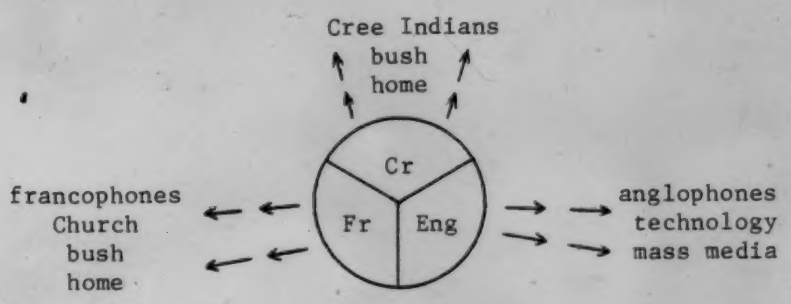
Diglossia and triglossia can be considered the most extreme examples of stable compartmentalization. They normally involve an urban literate component, as in Abdulaziz's (1972) example of triglossia in Tanzania. There, Swahili is used "in its various registers including slang and colloquial forms" (p. 201) by Tanzanians who have completed secondary school ; the second code, English, is considered bookish and prestigious ; and the third code, a local tribal language, is on the wane -- thus preparing the way for a diglossic situation similar to that of many Caribbean speech communities, where a near-standard language co-exists with a multi-faceted creole (see Hymes 1971 for many examples). Such a state of affairs could not possibly obtain among traditional

Metis, who are both rural and largely illiterate. Their case is more readily comparable to that of numerous rural communities in India, where language compartmentalization has been maintained by social compartmentalization, and where formal education plays a minor role (Gumperz and Wilson 1971 : 153). The only difference is that in the Metis case it is not only social, but primarily ethnic factors which have maintained linguistic compartmentalization. Also, the difference in degree of convergence in the two situations has as its source a much shorter period of contact and an evolution in an environment marked by motility in the Metis case, as opposed to the sessile character of the rural communities of India.

According to Whinnom (1971), there are four barriers to linguistic hybridization : ecological, emotional, mechanical, and conceptual. 1) The ecological barrier (absence of contact) obviously does not apply to the Metis, who were born from precisely such cultural contact and capitalized on it. 2) The emotional barrier is raised by contrary loyalties and is not applicable here either, as the Metis qua cultural brokers were per force loyal to multilingualism and knew their debt to a phenomenon which "does not arise except in response to social necessities, and . . . lasts only as long as these social necessities exist" (Haugen 1956 : 116). 3) Whinnom's mechanical barrier involves incompatibility of linguistic structures, which, especially when supported by emotional factors, retards the hybridization process : this obstacle, coupled with the short time depth of multilingual contact, is a cogent explanation of Metis compartmentalization. 4) The last barrier, conceptual, is raised by contrasting perceptions of reality linked with

mechanical divergence ; as will become clear in the remainder of this chapter and in the next, these contrasting perceptions have been well integrated by the Metis and have produced their distinctive identity.

A delicate balance between linguistic ease (convergence) and linguistic effort (compartmentalization) has thus been struck by the 50^{+}-year-old Mission Metis, with interference as its cement. Cree and French have been used in bilingual interaction for over two centuries, whereas English is a recent interloper which a transient trilingual segment of the population has adopted as the language of communication with the dominant society, but not as internal language ; this latter function applies only to the younger generations of Mission Metis, who have been steadily pulled toward monolingualism as they are increasingly internalizing English. If the triadic economy of the elders has failed to be transmitted to the younger generations, it is simply because the socio-economic upheavals of the post-World War II period, and the concomitant sweeping diffusion of English to the remotest parts of western Canada, have made it non-functional and have accelerated its disintegration. If we bear in mind that emotional distance is greater between the French-Cree group and English than between French and Cree, the linguistic compartmentalization of traditional Mission Metis can be symbolized thus (⇄ ⇄ representing functional pull) :



2. Sociolinguistic Interaction

2.1. Language Status. At this point it is necessary to try and determine, from a dialectological point of view, the status of each member of the Metis linguistic triad. The evidence gathered through participant observation and informal interviews is clear : the three languages have a roughly equivalent status among themselves. The Mission Metis claim not to favor any one of them to the detriment of the others ; while the francophones, anglophones, and -- to a lesser extent -- the Cree Indians of the area generally agree that their respective language as spoken by the Metis is a "patois" (this term is also used by the acculturated Metis to qualify the speech of their more traditional peers). The concept of standard language is totally extraneous to Mission Metis culture, underpinned as it is by contact (not enforced) multilingualism ; i.e., a kind of multilingualism whose "primary motivation is usefulness for communication" (Haugen 1956 : 85). The fact that no language or culture has been forced upon the Metis is important in accounting for the absence of resistance to some codes or of rigid loyalty to others in their language attitude, unlike for instance the Tewa of New Mexico, who reacted against coercion by cutting out Spanish borrowings (Dozier 1964); or the Eastern Cherokee, who have preserved their language as a manifestation of anti-White feeling (Hymes 1966 : 125). Here again, malleability appears as an important characteristic of the Metis' culture, and contributes to the vagueness of their White neighbors' cursory judgments regarding their linguistic status ; hence the need here for a more precise definition of at least what the three languages involved are not.

First of all, none of them can seriously be considered a pidgin because none exhibits the type of lexical impoverishment and grammatical attrition that goes with the appellation. French and Cree have long been native languages to the Metis, and therefore are fully adapted to their traditional cultures. This situation is in marked contrast with the transitory code known as baragouin, a pidgin used by French and Indian groups in the Montreal region in the 17th century (Hancock 1971 : 512). The name baragouin itself ("gibberish") comes from Breton bara gwin "bread (and) wine," the two words most commonly used by Breton pilgrims requesting hospitality in French inns (Bloch and von Wartburg 1960 : 57), and connotes a low degree of intelligibility and therefore of communicative efficiency. As for English, it may have been pidginized on an individual level when it began to enter the Metis way of life about a century ago -- but this state of affairs cannot have lasted long, as the anglophone society started diffusing to isolated Metis communities after World War I, in some cases making English one of the languages of the home as a result of marriages with anglophones. In any case, there seems to have always been enough bi- or trilinguals around the individual Metis speaker to make any established pidgin superfluous.

If the Metis languages have never been pidgins they obviously cannot be treated as creoles either, especially since creoles tend to be the product of an imposed diglossia (as in the case of Haitian French or Krio English) and are based on a significant restructuring of particular codes ; whereas we have seen that in the Metis case convergence is more a result than a starting point in the process of multilingual evolution. Even traditional Metis English, the weakest element of the triad on the

level of integration, would clearly occupy the "upper end" of the continuum of intelligibility proposed by Tsuzaki (1971) for Hawaiian English. This continuum runs thus :

Hawaiian Pidgin English
Hawaiian Creole English
Hawaiian Dialect English
Non-Standard Hawaiian English
Standard Hawaiian English

Hawaiian English begins to be intelligible to the average mainland American listener at Dialect level. As the three Metis codes are readily intelligible to speakers of the corresponding languages, they can undoubtedly be ascribed to the same level. They could also be conferred non-Standard status -- in the English case, for instance, because of the frequent absence of copula, the lack of friction in θ and ð, the simplified tense system, etc -- but such a speculative distinction is of dubious value considering the aforementioned irrelevance of the concept of Standard in the Metis linguistic environment. (Incidentally, Mission Metis perceive and produce θ and ð as dental stops, as do French Canadians and Cree Indians, and not as alveolar fricatives, as do European French ; Pitcairnese English Creole is unusual in mixing both systems so that θ --> s and ð --> d [Ross and Moverley 1964 : 157].)

More pertinent perhaps is the question whether the Metis codes are technically patois of their respective source languages or not ; the Metis' neighbors seem to think so, but they use the term only in the popular subjective meaning of "corrupted language." My own definition will be that found in Dauzat (1927 : 30) : "Est patois tout idiome, langue ou dialecte, socialement déchu" ; i.e., a patois is a code which,

through historical mishaps, has come to be viewed as socially inferior. Such a qualification does not apply in this case for several reasons. First, it is doubtful whether any of the Metis codes ever had a higher status than its present one, as it has always been part of an exclusively oral culture virtually devoid of schooling and, until the end of the 19th century at least, semi-nomadic. These codes would have then had to be judged by the standards of three higher codes :

(i) "High Cree" : the archaic language of traditional narratives and ceremonials, and of the liturgical texts transcribed by White missionaries ;

(ii) "High French" : the language of the educated and of the Catholic religious orders ; Scollon and Scollon (1979 : 233), for instance, mention the "religious and moral specialization of French" which prevailed at Fort Chipewyan until the 1970's ;

(iii) "High English" : the language of the educated and the powerful at the present time.

By such standards the Metis codes simply could not have any status in Canada, being noticed only by a few travelers who considered them a curiosity and quickly forgot about them.

The second reason for not considering these codes patois lies in a further remark made by Dauzat (1927 : 30) :

> Loin d'être attaché à son patois, le paysan le considère comme une langue inférieure dont il a plus ou moins honte (Far from being attached to his patois, the peasant sees it as an inferior language of which he is more or less ashamed).

Traditional Mission Metis are definitely not ashamed of their codes ;

indeed, they consider them to be efficient tools of communication -- whereas the younger and/or more acculturated Metis are beginning to feel self-conscious when measuring their community by the standards of the White anglophone world. Dissatisfaction then takes hold, accompanied by a denial of the traditional linguistic behavior : the French code is called a patois, the English one is "broken" ; as for Metis Cree : "It's no good Cree, not like on the reserves." Seen in this light, the term patois as applied to members of the traditional linguistic economy is simply and only an external perception, a carrier of judgemental cultural values.

The last argument for not labeling the Metis codes "patois" is the fact that their speakers are obviously not as culturally isolated as the typical European patois speakers covered by Dauzat's definition : i.e., for the most part peasants or sedentary, monolingual fishermen. The Mission Metis' occupations are eclectic -- they trap, fish, and hunt ; some are gardeners or hold odd jobs -- and the sedentary man's worldview is still alien to them. Their isolation is geographically recent, and ethnically or socially non-existent ; this very fact deprives their codes of the last feature put forward by Dauzat (1927 : 82) as characteristic of patois :

> Les principes qui dominent l'évolution des patois . . . sont l'élimination des formes aberrantes (créées par la phonétique) et la généralisation des séries les plus nombreuses (The principles that govern the evolution of patois are the removal of deviant forms (brought about by the sound system) and the generalization of prevalent paradigms).

The overall process of analogical leveling described here has been replaced in the Metis case by a linguistic convergence oriented toward Cree.

As a conclusion, it is reasonable to assume that each of the three codes has been prevented from becoming a patois, in the dialectological sense, by its mere co-existence with the other two : it has thus been impossible for any of them to undergo the long period of isolation (socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, etc) indispensable for this type of evolution to take place. The three Metis codes are therefore best viewed as individually stigmatized members of a coherent and unique linguistic economy.

2.2. Style and Code-Switching. At the beginning of my fieldwork I expected to observe different styles of linguistic behavior in the course of my exchanges and interviews, and to elicit at least a dual pattern of stylistic responses : e.g., beginning vs. end of the communicative act, linguistic attitude toward peers vs. toward ethnographer, normal vs. excited speech, etc. However, I have not been able to observe more than one style among traditional Mission Metis. Labov (1963 : passim ; 1964 : 167 ; 1966 : 4) found a similar situation on Martha's Vineyard, and relates this fact to the absence of extremes of wealth and poverty on the island. The Mission Metis community can also be said to be classless, with its elder trilinguals wielding languages in the place of styles and its younger monolinguals developing an awareness of the function of different styles in English. Gumperz (1971d : 230) has recognized this phenomenon : "the same social pressures which would lead a monolingual to change from colloquial to formal or technical styles may induce a

bilingual to shift from one language to another." In this way traditional speakers have categorical rules for each language (Metis French, Cree, and English), and variable rules for variation across languages.

The most that can be done in trying to elicit styles in this case is to place the members of the triad within the framework of interactional dimension proposed by Blom and Gumperz (1972) : Cree and French can then be viewed as personal codes (used with the inner group and for subsistence activities), while English is clearly transactional (outer group and technological domains). As a possible explanation for this situation I suggest that three languages with two or more styles each would be a heavy, unadaptive linguistic burden for a society with a semi-nomadic background, a loose internal egalitarian organization, and a pluralistic oral tradition.

There is no degree of prestige attached to any of the three languages, and neither are overt or covert prestige forms to be found in the Metis linguistic economy. Traditional speakers, when asked which language they prefer, answer : C'est tout de même pour moi, tout mêlé (It's all the same to me -- all mixed). Such a statement stresses their acceptance of trilingualism as the basis of their identity, at the same time as it treats as irrelevant the idiosyncracies so conspicuous to outsiders -- or, better perhaps, sublimates them as essential to the concept of Metis-ness, based on "mixing." Traditional Mission Metis are perfectly insensitive to the concept of higher/lower varieties, and have little definite sense of the appropriate use of a particular language for a strictly social purpose : for them one language takes on more value than the other two when it is required in a certain kind

of situation, with certain kinds of participants. Thus their linguistic behavior is conditioned not by social, but by situational factors : the Mission Metis have always co-existed with and related to what are still the three major ethnic groups of the Lac La Biche region, and have set up the three corresponding media of communication as an adaptation to the ethnolinguistic environment. Efficiently integrated to their milieu, they are socially viewed as marginal by their neighbors only because they happen to be the only ones belonging to three cultural groups at the same time.

Talking about Western Apache linguistic behavior, Basso (1979 : 8) notes that "code-switching may be strategically employed as an instrument of metacommunication -- that confers upon the matter of differentiation a measure of importance." The Mission Metis do not use code-switching in a metaphorical way as Western Apache do (English being used in that case to caricature the Whiteman's culture) because their code-switching, being situational, is largely automatic. It can be considered a metalanguage only in so far as it tells us something about the socio-economic specialization of each member of the linguistic triad, since it is established that "any two alternates having the same referential meaning can become carriers of social meaning" (Gumperz 1971e : 329). For example, Cree and French are tied in with the traditional activities of the bush (trapping, hunting, fishing) and conversations with the family or acquaintances having a similar background, whereas English is the language of technology (mechanics, transportation, house repairs, etc) and the medium used to approach strangers of indefinite background. The three languages are therefore essential to the Metis-ness of the

group, and are well integrated into the cultural patterns. This is why they are not used as stylistic devices, but as convenient communicative tools : if part of the discourse cannot readily be expressed in one language because of a lexical gap, one automatically switches to another one. The three languages, functionally distinct on the social level but semantically complementary during performance, then perform a kind of lexical patching on one another below the level of consciousness. In this way a former Metis prospector can be heard to say : On stakait des claims, là, la nuit (There we were, staking claims by night) -- thereby incorporating English lexemes into the morpho-syntax of French, very naturally and without any perceptible pause or hesitation.

This last example raises the problem of a potential difference between code-switching on the one hand and code-mixing on the other. The latter -- a subcategory of the former -- refers to what Labov (1971 : 457) calls "rapid code-switching," which he suspects to be largely unsystematic. He gives as an example this type of discourse, heard from a New York Puerto Rican speaker :

> Por eso cada, you know it's nothing to be proud of, porque yo no estoy proud of it, as a matter of fact I hate it, pero viene Viernes y Sábado yo estoy . . .

Far from finding such mixings unsystematic, Gumperz (1971e : 317) holds that they are by no means rare in multilingual speech and that they "signal a change in interpersonal relationship in the direction of greater informality or personal warmth."

However, Gumperz falls short of characterizing the full range of code-mixing when he declares that constructions of the type *he era

regador (He was an irrigator) seem to be impossible in bilingual discourse (ibid. : 320). My own fieldwork has elicited numerous Metis examples of code-mixing at the morphological level which disprove this : e.g., stakait [stɛke] (English stake + French 3rd person sing. imperfect suffix -ait + French oxytonic) or climber [klajme] (English climb + French infinitive suffix -er + French oxytonic). The fact that English [stejk] and [k^hlajm] become French [stɛk] and [klajm] -- i.e., lose their characteristically un-French post-vocalic glide and consonantal aspiration respectively -- corroborates Sankoff and Poplack's (1981) free morpheme constraint on code-mixing : viz., for a switch to occur within a word, the free morpheme must have been phonologically integrated into the language of the bound morpheme. Such an extreme type of code-mixing appears to be directly proportional to the degree of involvement in the discourse and thus to be carrier, if not of personal warmth, at least of a message of personal significance. This feature may represent the closest one can come to eliciting a stylistic gradation among traditional Mission Metis.

Code-switching (characterizing the larger parts of discourse, i.e., sentences) and code-mixing (characterizing the smaller parts, i.e., morphemes and lexemes) can also point to the contextual accuracy of the utterance. For instance, Boniface (age : 65), relating an encounter with a bear, said : Le petit gars il avait peur, il voulait climber un tree ; j'ai dit : no use (The kid was scared, he wanted to climb a tree ; I said : no use). His switching to English indicates that he recalls the event in its exact context -- an adventure shared with a young anglophone companion and probably commented upon in English

immediately afterwards. Another example involves Boniface again, this time with his son (age : 38), who understands French but does not speak it :

Ethnographer : Qu'est-ce que l'anglais représente pour vous ? l'argent ? (What does English mean to you ? money ?)

Boniface : C'est la seule (It's the only)... yeah, because if you don't talk English... si vous pouvez pas parler l'anglais, ils viendront pas vous engager en français (if you don't speak English, they won't use French to hire you).

His son : To get a job, you want to learn the language.

Boniface : Puis si vous comprenez pas, ben he (And if you don't understand, well he)... they fire you.

In this conversation the mere mention of English as the language of money conjures up the context in which it is most important -- that of employment. Necessarily, then, English steps in as it is used by postulants in the waiting room of a hiring agency, with a well-known leitmotiv ("if you don't talk English") and its presumably inevitable consequence ("they fire you"). In such an exchange, the son's interruptions in English are of only secondary importance as trigger-utterances : it is the nature of the topic that puts French and Cree out of context.

3. Categories and Continua

3.1. Mechanics of Pluralism. We have seen how Cree has pervaded several aspects of French and English phonology and syntax, conferring on these two languages a typically Metis character ; how each member of the

linguistic triad is a full-fledged language ; and finally how considerations of sociolinguistic status must give way to a functional ethnolinguistic outlook. The traditional Metis communicative medium is best seen as <u>one</u> linguistic system, composed of three codes readily interchangeable according to the situation ; the latter is determined on the interactional level by the identity and background of the addressee, on the psycholinguistic level by the condition of the word-retrieval capacity at the time of the utterance. The personality of the addressee feeds ethnolinguistic (rather than sociolinguistic, i.e., status-oriented) information into the Metis speaker's cognitive system ; this process triggers off the choice of a code suitable for that particular exchange. The word-retrieval capacity is conditioned by language-specific memory limitations (a signifier becomes momentarily unavailable for representing a referent), and by the imprint of a particular language on a particular context (as in the two examples quoted in the preceding section, where Boniface cannot but revert to the language of the original event). In both situations code-switching will operate -- in the first case to palliate the deficit of one code, in the second to associate the current linguistic output automatically to the event it represents.

The three codes making up the Mission Metis linguistic economy are the community's own versions of an Algonquian, a Romance, and a Germanic language, each of which patches up the others' situational shortcomings to constitute a very flexible, adaptive medium. As a communicative unit, the three languages represent a spatially circumscribed synthesis of a linguistic area which seems to characterize northern Alberta and possibly

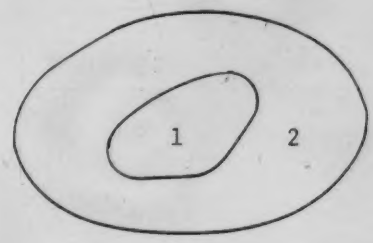
a larger part of western Canada, and is marked by phonological raising. It is now largely recognized (see e.g., Sherzer 1973) that contiguous unrelated languages tend to share certain superficial features which determine a linguistic area for these features. Emeneau (1964 : 650), for instance, has described this concept as "meaning an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to the members of (at least) one of the families." This interpretation of convergence -- a partial rendition of the idea of Sprachbund, a situation where "adjoining and overlapping languages give and take" (Anttila 1972 : 172) -- has since been made more specific by Sherzer (1973) and Bright and Sherzer (1976).

Sherzer (1973 : 787), for example, distinguishes several types of communicative areas, one of which is frequently found in association with groups living in "densely populated areas, (with) individuals organized in relatively small groups, much intermarriage and bilingualism." This definition applies to the Metis of the early fur trade, who lived in the comparatively crowded areas of eastern Canada, had a small level of social organization, and mixed freely languages and marriage partners (Peterson 1978 : passim). Since then the Metis have spread far and wide, but their migration has not altered these basic attributes of intermixture ; they can therefore be considered as potential synthesizers of linguistic area features.

In this case, phonological raising is present in northern Alberta among many ethnic groups : the French Canadians raise /t/ and /d/ to assibilated [ts] and [dz] (see Chapter 3 : 2.1.) ; the Plains Cree raise /e/ and /o/ to [ɪ] and [ʊ] (Darnell and Vanek 1973 : 175), and,

along with the mixed Natives of Fort Chipewyan, show much confusion in the palatal region (Scollon and Scollon 1979 : 98ff), so that /ts/ and /s/ are commonly palatalized (raised) to [tš] and [š]. As was made clear in the preceding chapter, traditional Mission Metis have systematized these peculiarities. They also exhibit a third type of raising, which it was not deemed necessary to mention before owing to its apparent lack of systematicity, but which is relevant to the level of generalization aimed at here : this raising transforms /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ into [e] and [o] respectively. I have not been able to find any clear-cut pattern, only that such occurrences are common, apply only when the vowel precedes one of the traditional lengthening consonants and cluster of Old French and Canadian French (viz., v, z, ž, r, and vr), and therefore are always accompanied by a corresponding vocalic lengthening ; in this way neige "snow" is pronounced [ne:z] and encore "yet" [ãko:r]. The Mission Metis linguistic area can thus be comprehended as a concentration of areal features :

1 Mission Metis raising
2 general raising tendency in northern Alberta



Placed as they are at the center of such a speech area, traditional Mission Metis are keenly conscious of their linguistic pluralism ; and, even though they produce numerous interferences in their speech acts without seemingly being aware of them, they realize the existence of the phenomenon and comment openly on it -- unlike Blom and Gumperz's (1972) Hemnesberget informants, who thought they spoke only the local dialect in personal interactions when in fact they unconsciously

switched to Standard Norwegian. The difference between the two attitudes rests of course on the total absence of any notion of prestige in the Metis code-switching process, which simply expresses a concern for survival inherited from the days of trading with Indians and White trappers and settlers. The example given again and again to prove one's proficiency at a language is : "If I'm hungry I can go to a French (or English, or Cree) house and ask for food : they'll give it to me." The same concrete image is used by the Natives of Fort Chipewyan, who also live in contact with several ethnic groups (Ronald Scollon : p.c.).

3.2. The Question of Acculturation. Multilingualism has long been indispensable to the survival of Metis communities, and its cultural importance is therefore very serious. However, the Mission linguistic economy in its traditional state (as represented by the 50^{+} generation) is a very relaxed affair whose efficacy is taken for granted. This situation contrasts sharply with that obtaining in such cultures as the Australian Aborigines', where name taboo is still very much alive (von Sturmer 1981 : 16) and the spoken word is invested with so much physical reality that it can be given and stolen -- even among the partly modernized fringe dwellers (Sansom 1980 : 24ff). Among the Mission Metis as in most Amerindian cultures (see Basso 1970, Preston 1976, Darnell 1980), speech is not overly valued and silence has its place, too -- as is easily noticed by the White person, often to his discomfort : for example, prolonged silence is no embarrassment to the Wishram, among whom a visit to a friend is not necessarily accompanied by talk (Hymes 1966 : 134). Even now, at a time when the influence of schooling is beginning to be felt in the homes, Mission Metis children are not

specifically taught to speak, and actually start speaking late by White middle-class standards -- a behavior which follows the Cree pattern. The differences obtaining between the Amerindians', the Aborigines', and the Whites' attitudes toward language and its acquisition point to the existence of the second type of linguistic relativity posited by Hymes (1966), which bears on the diversity of culturally expressive values that distinct societies attribute to language.

In traditional Mission Metis terms, "proper language" is not style-bound : it is simply a medium which, like every item in the bushman's panoply, must be adaptable, tough, and unobtrusive. In other words, it must be able to respond immediately and adequately to communicative needs : "If you speak French, I speak French ; English, I speak English ; same thing for Cree," as the elders put it. This expression is more than just a tautology : it stresses the fact that one never even thinks of imposing any one language in the conversation for reasons of ideology or the sake of greater ease. Things are changing, though ; and the younger generation has progressively discarded the traditional triad for a more obtrusive, style-conscious, one-coded repertoire based on English alone.

The Mission community is now split between two cultural categories corresponding to what Scollon and Scollon (1979) call "bush consciousness" and "modern consciousness." It is these terms I shall also use for want of better ones, after stripping them of their awkward connotations. The term "bush consciousness," especially, calls for delicate manipulation as it can all too readily appropriate the undesirable ring that "savage," "primitive," etc., have to modern anthropological ears. This concept has

nevertheless been adopted here, and this for two reasons. First, for the Mission Metis -- as, undoubtedly, for the Indians and Metis of Fort Chipewyan -- this expression carries no derogatory connotation. Mission Metis use bush (French : bois ; Cree : sakāw) as a symbol of freedom and Metis-ness : for them it does not evoke backwardness but la belle vie, the good life. The second reason for conserving this term is that "bush consciousness" is a conspicuous label which aptly characterizes a no less conspicuous semantic space in Metis awareness. The Whites themselves have been sensitive to it, and have subsumed it under the concept of hardy recreation. Thus it is not surprising that at least two films glorifying this symbol of "natural" life have been made in conjunction with the western survivors of the old Metis voyageurs and coureurs de bois : one, The Lakeman (Garceau 1961), focuses on the daily life of a Metis fisherman played by one of my informants, Magloire (see Chapter 5, 1.3.) ; the other film, The Man Who Chooses the Bush (Radford 1975), is a character study of Frank, a distant Fort Chipewyan cousin of Magloire, who lives alone in the bush for six months every year.

The psychological reality of the concept of bush consciousness is thus well grounded. However, Scollon and Scollon's dichotomy is very sharp and heavily intellectualized. On the one hand modern consciousness stands for logico-mathematical and associational thinking ; it is characterized by "componentiality, decontextualization and bureaucratization" (p. 39), and is phonologically revealed by a greater use of the variable [s]. On the other hand bush consciousness stands for holistic and directional thinking, and is "individualistic, integrative, entropic and non-intervening" (p. 41) ; phonologically, it

is represented by a greater use of the variable [ɣ̞]. In many respects this dichotomy is reminiscent of the one devised by Redfield (1930) to describe the Mexican community of Tepoztlán : there, he found the continuum leading from folk culture to urban culture bounded by los tontos (naive traditional folk) and los correctos (responsible agents of acculturation), two categories belonging to local stereotypes. To this analysis Lewis (1951) later objected that the terms chosen were descriptive of personality rather than of social or ideological class in the speech of Tepoztecans ; and he concluded :

> While Redfield's concept would tend to make for two cultures, we see Tepoztlán as a single culture, with more or less acculturated individuals in close and frequent contact, each influencing the other . . . (Lewis 1951 : 431).

Leacock (1981 : 313) has already observed that such sharp "modern-traditional" polarity concepts "reduce the depth and richness of differing historical realities to narrow and stereotyped terms." The same kind of criticism can be levelled at the Scollons, whose sundering description of two behavioral extremes reminds one of Benedict's (1934) pathological view of culture configurations and their mutual incompatibilities.

Scollon and Scollon's (1979 : 181) definition of bush consciousness is based on the notion of entropy : i.e., a breakdown of order and systematicity. Two objections can immediately be raised regarding the application of this concept to a cultural situation :

a) entropy, as a concomitant of the fashionable and misquoted Second Law of Thermodynamics, concerns only closed systems as defined

by the First Law : it is therefore doubtful whether it can be of relevance to such presumably open systems as characterize biology (Creationist doctrine notwithstanding) or culture (the Scollons notwithstanding) ;

b) entropy, as a loose concept estranged from physics, is highly subjective and describes an energy leakage from a level of order and systematicity which may exist only in the mind of the beholder (here, the ethnographer) ; it is therefore no more than a personal, culture-bound evaluation.

Thus, by characterizing bush consciousness as a "disrespect for order," Scollon and Scollon (1979 : 180) unwittingly take the ethnocentric attitude of assuming that the non-Western mind is sensitive to our concept of "order" in all its presumed objective existence. Furthermore, it is misleading to tie bush consciousness (certainly primary in Native ethos, and hence positive) to a behavior characteristic of a negative secondary ethos in our own Western society -- viz., that of unemployed urban youth of various backgrounds, or more generally any individuals living in what they perceive as deprived surroundings. Similarly, the Scollons consider entropic the apparently chaotic restlessness of the Fort Chipewyan community, as well as the worldview connoted by a young girl's seemingly vague statement that home is "where you usually go" (p. 182). If, however, we enlarge the White nuclear concept of <u>home</u> in order to include the bush, then the Natives are merely seen as rambling on their homegrounds, instead of being committed to purposeless peregrinations away from the settlement that <u>we</u> think should be their base. In this way the behavior under study is

being appreciated in a less ethnocentric, more positive manner ; and obviously a positive presentation of the facts is necessary when one's goal is to describe a culture from the inside. Bush consciousness is then no longer seen as a secondary reaction to an objective modern consciousness, but as a worldview basic to bush people and primary in the area concerned.

My own definition of bush and modern consciousness as regards Mission Metis covers physical, social, and linguistic correlates which can more readily escape the observer's idiosyncracies. It is rooted in the following activities :

	bush consciousness	modern consciousness
age	50^{+}	30^{-}
subsistence activities	fishing, trapping, hunting	steady employment
group activities	Church, Metis music and dances	Rock and Country music, little or no Church
linguistic economy	trilingualism : French, Cree, English	monolingualism : English

This pattern is remarkably stable and follows the age line closely ; I know of only one notable exception -- a 50^{+}-year-old man who held an administrative job for a long time, has been self-employed for the past 15 years, and has clearly entered the "modern consciousness" category. Predictably, the situation is most clear-cut for those individuals closest to the ends of the continuum ; as for those who fall in between (aged 30-50), classification must take into account such complementary factors as personality, loyalties, marital status, etc.

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In this chapter the phenomenon of multilingualism has been placed

within a more holistic context and studied in terms of both structure and function. The mapping of the Mission community on a continuum of acculturation, begun in Chapter 3 on a purely linguistic basis, has here been substantiated in a cross-cultural perspective. It is now time to focus on the sense of identity of the community members by presenting a selection of case studies and a sample of narrative tradition.

CHAPTER V

PATTERNS OF IDENTITY

1. Eight Case Histories

Besides fleshing out the academic description of a particular human group, the concrete depiction of informants' life stories and personalities also helps to shed light on the setting of the fieldwork, and the varying quality of rapport between ethnographer and informants. For this dual purpose, eight case histories have been selected among the 30^{+} generations on the basis of the variety of individual responses they represent. Younger Mission Metis are not considered here because, having been socialized into the cultural discontinuity obtaining between the Mission community and the centralized Lac La Biche school system, they are effectively alienated from the greater part of their elders' values.

In order to illustrate the dynamic nature of Metis identity, the individuals selected are presented on a continuum where they occupy consecutive places, sometimes irrespective of age. We start, for instance, with Baptiste (age : 53) as the best representative of bush consciousness ; and end with Celestine (76) as the most acculturated member of the modern consciousness group ; with Joseph, only 36, somewhere in the middle[1]. As we progress from one pole of the continuum

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1 The names used in this section are pseudonyms.

to the other, these individuals exhibit a decreasing production of the four grammatical features described as stereotypes in Chapter 3, and consistently alter the multilingualism variable from trilingualism to bilingualism (monolingualism being restricted to the 30^{-} generation).

This section is intended to be descriptive and non-teleological : inferences and interpretations will therefore be kept to a minimum. The fact that this sample deals with only three women as opposed to five men must not be taken as another example of sexual partiality : more simply, the natural or culturally determined shyness common among older Metis women often made it difficult for a male investigator to have prolonged conversations with them.

1.1. Baptiste. My first interview with Baptiste (age : 53) was unexpectedly well structured. Whereas most of the older Mission Metis treat their appointments in the most casual manner, Baptiste was ready at the time we had agreed upon ; he was waiting for me in an old house near his trailer, with two chairs for us and a table for the tape-recorder. A hapless grandson who was straying about was forcibly extruded from the room, and the rickety door was kept shut with the help of two knives driven into the frame. Obviously, Baptiste meant business. I understood later that he was caught in a dilemma : on the one hand he was attracted by the novel experience of being interviewed and the prospect of listening to his own voice for the first time, but on the other hand he did not want any of his family to eavesdrop in case they should later poke fun at him on account of some possible blunder or awkward behavior on his part.

Baptiste is married and has thirteen children. He lives on the site

of his old house in a new trailer featuring many rooms and all modern facilities. He spent his childhood at Owl River (on the northern shore of the lake) far from any school, and for this reason is illiterate. His mother had no English, his father very little ; but he himself speaks three languages : for instance I heard him speak Cree and English at home (his wife does not speak French), Cree with his elder sister (age : 72), and French when telephoning to his cousin. Eight of his children have received French names, the other five English names. When pressed, Baptiste conceded, "J'aime parler mieux ma langue français, parce que mon pēre il me parlait français tout le temps" (I prefer to speak my French language because my father used to speak French to me all the time) ; however, this loyalty was soon shattered by a statement that he put "le cri et le français ensemble, et l'anglais, too" (Cree and French together, and English, too).

Baptiste had a turbulent youth ; but, urged by his wife, he quit drinking and smoking altogether a long time ago and is now a staunch supporter of the law : "Les Mētis, ça boit trop fort ; moi, jamais je casse la loi" (Metis drink too much ; I never break the law). Baptiste may even have perceived me as a potential arbiter of morals because of my staying at the Oblate Mission, for he insisted once on showing me his bedroom at the far end of his trailer ; and, pointing to the rosary hanging from one of the bedposts, said with a smile : "Tu vois, je suis catholique, je prie comme il faut" (You see, I'm a Catholic, I pray properly). This half-jocular way of professing respectability is reminiscent of Darnell's (1974 : 326) old Cree narrator, who was "eager to establish that he did not drink" and thus to meet what he thought

were the White intruder's expectations. Of a very different kind was the comment Baptiste made after meeting a female friend of mine : "She beautiful woman, I'd like to squeeze her." We seem to have here an expression of decidedly Gallic earthy concerns, untrammelled by the Metis' close association with the Church.

Baptiste began hunting, trapping, and fishing at the age of 15 under the guidance of his father ; and he is known as one of the best woodsmen of the region. He was also my best informant regarding the activities of the bush, showing off his guns and traps and explaining when and how one goes about trapping coyotes, wolves, lynx, beaver, and fox. Trapping and fishing are still his mainstay, supplemented by intermittent periods of work as a watchman. Baptiste does not resent paying a $ 15 licence for trapping, when he can make $ 2,000 in one season -- in these conditions "even a hundred dollars would be nothing." For him, bush life is the ideal refuge : "Tu vas dans les bois, t'es bien, là" (You go into the bush, there you feel fine). Modern conveniences such as the truck, the snowmobile, and a TV set in the trapline cabin, have been readily accepted and integrated into the traditional patterns. An increasing problem nowadays is the widespread ignorance of bush skills, especially on the part of foreigners : "Les American States ça vient hunter icitte . . . Ça vient icitte, ça tue toutes choses pour un rien, rien que ça prend des cornes" (The Americans come to hunt here . . . They come here and hunt anything, provided it has antlers). Asked which ethnic group with which he felt in closest association, Baptiste emphasized his singularity in typical Metis fashion : "Les Mētis ça aime mieux pour rester tout seuls d'un bord"

(Metis prefer to be left alone on their side [of the society]) ; flexibility of language and culture is thus not seen as precluding individuality, but rather as enhancing it.

1.2. Antoinette. Antoinette (age : 62) lives with her husband Hilaire (68) some 300 metres from the mission, in a small house they rent from the Oblate Order. The interviews took place in the small and cosy main room, with Hilaire present and frequently intervening. The couple was smoking continuously, and the television was on throughout the exchange (it was not the focus of attention, however ; and Antoinette says that they watch it only "sometimes, at night"). When first I went there, Antoinette was concerned about her cat, who had disappeared the day before ; and this subject quickly led us to talk about household and related activities. It turned out that Hilaire is a retired commercial fisherman who spends most of his time tending his garden by the church. They used to own several head of cattle, poultry, and even a goat ; but Hilaire feels he is getting old and has abandoned farming as well as trapping. As for Antoinette, she works in the Lac La Biche hospital. They have two children -- a son who is a truck driver in Alberta, and a daughter living in Ontario ; the latter has been the pretext for the only trip Antoinette took outside Alberta. Asked what she usually did when she got her yearly two weeks' holiday, Antoinette answered with a smile, "I drive my truck." As in most Metis households, this truck is a great instrument of freedom and mobility, and is used even to cover the tiny distance that separates Antoinette and Hilaire from the mission. In this the Mission Metis are part of the "jalopy culture" that Bennett (1969 : 158) posits for most North American Natives.

The couple is very realistic where language is concerned. Brought up in French and Cree by parents who "couldn't talk English," both acknowledge that outside the home people speak mostly English nowadays. Cree is used "not too often," mostly with Indians ; and French sometimes with the Albertan French. Hilaire volunteered an explanation for this increased use of English : "When you don't talk English people think you're talking behind their back, and they don't like it." It must be noted here that Hilaire, a World War II (home defense) veteran and a fire helper, is obviously impressed by many aspects of Western culture and seems to have been consciously practicing English to the detriment of other languages. Antoinette went to school at the mission convent, then run by the Filles de Jésus order of nuns, and where both French and English were media of education. Both she and her husband can read, their only regular newspaper being The Native People (in English) ; they cannot read Cree syllabics. Antoinette exhibits a typically Metis blend of joviality and reserve, and her humor clearly foreshadows the more bawdy example quoted in section 2 of this chapter. For instance, after indicating that she had been married since 1942, she commented : "C'est long avec le même cavalier" -- a play on words with sexual connotations to the effect that "it is a long time with the same escort/rider." Such an attitude is nevertheless rare among older Mission Metis women, and must be attributed to the fact that Antoinette is the only one of them who works outside the home and therefore has multifarious daily contacts with the dominant society.

1.3. Magloire. Magloire (age : 68) was an unusual informant in two respects. First, he has been married for only ten years and has no

children ; second, he was chosen to act in the film The Lakeman (Garceau 1961) because of his robust personality, and this experience seems to have somewhat confirmed the playful side of his character. In this romanticized documentary film Magloire portrayed himself as a simple fisherman who loves his trade and strays away from God's path only once a month when he goes to town to spend his last dollars ; his natural taciturnity was duly exploited so that he appeared as a man of few words who opens his mouth mostly to sing old French songs taught him by his mother. Magloire's life is still focused on the lake, where he fishes with his wife Ann ; he does not trap or hunt any more, and has stopped playing the fiddle because of arthritis contracted by fishing in cold waters.

Magloire is trilingual, but speaks mainly Cree with his wife, born of a Metis mother and an Irish father. She taught him to read and write syllabics, but otherwise he is semi-illiterate because he never went to school. The couple lives in a very secluded cove, 3 kilometers from the mission. Magloire built their small house "without square," with just the help of his hands and eyes : he thereby demonstrated the woodsman's preference for context-sensitive rather than objective measurement in tasks which are individual, as in bush activities, instead of specialized and objectified, as in modern activities (Denny 1981 : 42).

Magloire began to be exposed to English at the age of 15. He claims to be Saulteaux on his mother's side, which is possible since at the end of the 18th century "the North West Company brought into the interior as many as 200 Iroquois, Ottawa, Nipissing and Saulteaux trapper-voyageurs" (J. Foster 1979 : 85), some of whom took Cree wives and called themselves

Metis. This is perhaps the reason why Magloire likes to think of himself as a sauvage ("savage," or rather "woodsman" : the 17th-century non-derogatory term the Metis apply to Status Indians) : "Je me fais à manger en sauvage, dehors, je fais un feu en sauvage ; et puis l'homme blanc il gèle à côté de moi avec son petit feu" (I cook my food like an Indian, outside, I build an Indian fire ; and the White man is frozen next to me, with his small fire).

Magloire is a man of contrasts. Caring for his rough image and grouchy reputation, he refused to let me into his house until I finally said I came from France, after which he lavished hospitality upon me. Some days later, when I proposed to take a few photographs, he reassured me : "On cassera pas votre caméra" (We won't break your camera). A devout man, he once showed me a small pebble he had found in Lake St. Anne (a well-known place of pilgrimage for Western Canadian Catholic Natives) and which he likened to a portrait of the Virgin Mary : "Ils ont voulu me donner dix piastres for it," he said, "mais t'as pas besoin de manger quatre ou cinq jours et t'as tes dix piastres" (They wanted to give me ten dollars for it, but all you need is not to eat for four or five days and you'll get your ten dollars).

In spite of his 1961 experience with filming and recording apparatus, Magloire at first was concerned about the presence of a tape-recorder between us, and asked : "Y a pas de bêtises, dedans ?" (There's no nonsense in that ?) ; however, it was not long before he made sure I would send him a copy of the tape for him to play on his battered Philips tape-recorder. Ever in search of fun, Magloire one day caught an Oblate brother saying before examining an object, "I'll take off my glasses to

have a better look at it" -- which sent him roaring laughing and jibing at the brother, who "takes off his glasses so he won't see so bright." Likewise, when a neighbor told him how his lettuce was thriving and that Magloire should consider planting some too, he immediately attracted the comment, "I'll tell you the easiest way : when you sleep hard I'll go cut some of your nice lettuce." Finally, Magloire applies his Metis versatility to the concept of time, especially when translated into figures ; and has been seen struggling for nearly two minutes in an attempt to find out which year he acted in The Lakeman. Adding and subtracting ceaselessly, he eventually put forward the imprecise (and wrong) date : 1962 or 63. The difficulties in computing thus encountered by Magloire should not be surprising if we reflect that in a non-industrial society -- especially one living off the bush -- only small numbers are usually needed, as most items are known individually and thoroughly, and therefore do not require computation (Denny 1981 : 6, 51). The ensuing relaxed attitude toward large figures is extended to dates, and overlaps the general Native indifference to linear concepts of time (see Chapter 6 : 1.2., for further elaboration).

In sum Magloire, as a man who featured in a film shown twice at the mission for the benefit of the community, is very much aware of his importance qua interpreter (McFee 1968 : 1100) : that is to say, he is a broker who maneuvers consciously between two cultures, in this case representing traditional Metis values to the White world and shaping modern opportunities to his own purposes.

1.4. Léon. I met Léon (age : 50) in his small house, over a cup of tea and a meal of bannock and blueberry pie prepared for me by his wife,

who is only 30. The three of us talked for a few hours with the television blaring and the couple's two daughters frisking in the background. Léon is trilingual, but never spoke much Cree and is corrected by his wife when he does ; his wife was brought up in English and Cree, learned some French after she was 15, and tries to speak it in spite of the husband's frequent interruptions and corrections. Most of the time, however, Léon speaks French to his wife and she answers in English ; their daughters speak only English. Languages are definitely of little concern to this family, yet Léon asked me with genuine curiosity whether Cree was spoken in France.

Unlike most Mission Metis, Léon uses slang words of a sexual nature (e.g., cloche "penis") and blasphemous curses (e.g., ciboire, sacristie, etc), most of which belong to the common French Canadian fund ; this idiosyncracy is accompanied by a somewhat restless behavior at mass, with furtive glances and smiles exchanged with wife and friends. Léon went to school at the mission until the age of 13. Later he fished commercially for 15 years, and tried mink ranching for a while but had to quit when prices began to fall -- and also because it was a "disgusting business" owing to the offensive smell and the cleaning chores involved. Léon now works for the railroad, but is handicapped by a diabetic condition which once sent him to an Edmonton hospital for two months and forces him to work slowly and sleep a lot. His wife does the gardening, and he sometimes hunts ; he has never trapped, and his idea of the good life is to own a small ranch with plenty of animals but no crops.

Asked whether he had ever heard about Louis Riel, Léon said that

he did not know much about the "old stories," but that his father had a book about him : this statement confirms a perception that 50+-year-old Mission Metis seem to have of their fathers as knowledgeable repositories of traditional lore. They are also aware that this lore has been gradually lost, at the same time as the singing and dancing sessions that brought the community together. This fact is epitomized by a recent change in Léon's leisure activities : whereas he used to read the French newspaper La Survivance at the end of his working day, he now spends all his evenings in front of the English-speaking television.

1.5. Eusèbe. Eusèbe (age : 50) owns a house with 16 acres of land. He is a commercial fisherman, and also runs with his brother-in-law an oil-delivery business in which they operate two trucks of 70 and 90 barrels respectively. He never did any trapping but does some hunting, even though he does not like killing animals. His wife was present at the exchange but seldom participated. They have seven children, all with English names, five of whom are still at home. One son in particular is a source of pride : he has joined the RCMP, is studying at night (among other topics : French), and has married a francophone teacher. Eusèbe is literate and claims to speak English better than French ; as for Cree : "We shouldn't even talk Cree ; as far as I know we don't have Cree blood -- we're Saulteaux from Manitoba." Eusèbe, being related to Magloire, shares the same belief in their origins but incorporates it into a completely different worldview.

This defensive attitude, coupled with a lack of concern for religion, tends to make Eusèbe feel insecure about his traditional background : "When you talk several languages there comes a point where

you can't talk any properly," he claims, adding that his French is not "right" and cannot in any way compare with mine. A man of initiative, he views modern changes positively : "La vie a changé en bien" (Life has changed for the better). He recalls the time when he was working at the mission for $ 2 a day, and compares it with the later developments -- the plot of land he sold at a very substantial profit, the minks he raised for two years, and his present lucrative activities. Yes, civilization is good : "Remember that before the White man came the Indian's life span was around 25." Eusèbe concedes that the Indians have benefited from modernization even more than the Metis : they do not pay taxes, get many things free (e.g., ammunition), and some of them have even less Native blood than he... Eusèbe is the first example in this series of an individual who can be placed without hesitation at the "modern consciousness" end of our continuum.

1.6. Joseph. With Joseph (age : 36), we have a more curious case of acculturation. He has ceased to identify himself with the Metis, and consciously cultivates features normally associated with Western "cowboy" culture. A fervent admirer of "the States," he speaks English with a pronounced drawl and sharply retroflexed r's, wears pointed boots, and has graced his pick-up truck with pictures of wild animals and sparsely clad girls. Having obtained a substantial compensation following a serious injury received while on duty as a night watchman, Joseph leads a leisurely life and has turned to angling, an activity almost unknown to net-fishing Mission Metis. Angling allows Joseph to demonstrate his skill and his knowledge of the lake ; for him jackfish is the only "noble" fish, and the value of the catch is directly proportional to its

size and the resistance it has offered -- an attitude which runs counter to the traditional bushman's primary concern for economical survival techniques. Where other Metis introduce one to their guns and traps, Joseph shows off his rods and tackle. He also tends to be very depreciatory of other people's efforts to enter his field of expertise.

Joseph is single and lives in a small house on a plot of land he shares with his brother, who is in his late forties and married to a francophone. Before working as a night watchman, Joseph was a salesman. He went to school for eight years, and claims he understands French and Cree "a little." However, as I came in unannounced one day, I found him speaking Cree on the telephone in a very fluent manner : that day, Joseph unwittingly demonstrated to me the danger inherent in cursory surveys and the importance of self-image in one's response to investigators.

1.7. Marie. Marie (age : 59) is separated from her husband and lives on a farm situated 10 kilometers west of the mission, with her two brothers who were commercial fishermen for a long time but have since turned farmers. She cooks for them, tends the garden, and keeps the house spotlessly clean. During her leisure time she practices embroidery, and has made a great number of plain and multicolored doilies. Marie complains that her brothers are boors who just gulp down their meals without an iota of appreciation, and soil the house with their muddy boots and dirty hands ; yet the first time I met her, she kept a vigilant eye on the clock for fear of being late in preparing their supper. She had 6 children, 4 of whom died : this loss may explain why she is religious to the extent that her own brothers tax her with bigotry. For

instance, she has witnessed glossolalic manifestations and accepts them unquestioningly : "Je comprenais pas, mais c'était beau : c'était la langue de Dieu" (I couldn't understand, but it was beautiful : it was God's tongue). Marie also claims to have been cured from rheumatism and neurasthenia in three days by group prayer ; this event was interpreted as a "miracle of Jesus," and religion has since tinted every aspect of her life. She reads the Bible (in English) every night, and considers that her life would be ideal if her brothers were willing to drive her to the mission more often. Her loyalty to French is also dependent on religion : "Mon père il nous faisait prier en français, et la messe était toute en français ; et puis j'aimais ça, moi" (My father made us pray in French, and the mass was all in French -- I loved it).

Marie's father came from Quebec, but her mother was a Mission Metis. She is a French speaker foremost, not having spoken English until she was 16 and being able to understand only a little Cree. Her former husband wanted to talk only English, and she recognizes the use of this language as a lingua franca ; however, she speaks only French with her brothers -- a variety closer to Albertan French than to Metis French, with hissing affrication, very little vowel raising, and no morpho-syntactic deviation.

Marie's schooling at the mission convent appears to have given her a normative attitude toward languages. Thus she considers French more "beautiful" than English ; but her opinion of the local speakers of French, including herself, is low : "Nous, ça coupe ; on parle trop vite" (We slur ; we talk too fast). She admires the mission's Italian priest because his French is "pareil comme qu'on lit" (Just as one reads)

-- i.e., he pronounces each syllable distinctly and realizes schwas which are normally silent ("Italian accent"). With a compelling sense of imitation and much accuracy, she compared this priest's and her own rendition of Je suis tout seul (I'm on my own) : [žə sẅi tu soel] for the former, [štəsoel] for the latter. The "correct" pronunciation was accompanied by a distingué intonation and slow tempo, the stigmatized one by a vulgar pouting of the lips and hurried delivery. Marie thus showed her desire to break away from her social environment, albeit in the direction of cultivated French as a vehicle of spirituality rather than English as a vehicle of modernity.

1.8. Célestine. Célestine is a 76-year-old widow who lives in the town of Lac La Biche in a middle-class house, surrounded by furniture and dinner ware in the English style. Born of a Metis father and a French mother, she married a Lebanese ; both worked hard, opened a store, and became well-to-do. Célestine speaks French and English, but her children have only an understanding of French ; she "perfected" this language at the mission convent school, and considers the various dialects of Canadian French to be "pas le vrai français" (not the real French). Her pronunciation is unusually close to that of Standard French, with only mild assibilation and presence of back [ã̃] instead of front [ã̃] -- a feature which may be due to a partly conscious imitation of the French spoken by European priests and nuns. This tendency appeared reinforced when Célestine was talking directly to me ; whereas she reverted to more typically Canadian French pronunciation and expressions when addressing one of her two daughters, who was present at our conversation.

The most important fact concerning this informant is that I came to

see her knowing nothing about her Metis background, purporting simply to use the interview to set up a French Albertan control group. Even though I mentioned the Mission Metis several times during the exchange, Célestine never acknowledged any relationship with them ; I learned of the fact later, from some elders who are her cousins. In this case the process of acculturation has therefore been completed : the individual associates fully with modern consciousness, and stigmatizes all the signs of more traditional consciousness and behavior.

* * * * * * * * *

Taken together, these eight case histories illustrate the fact that a continuum of acculturation should be based on the analysis of broad dependent variables such as loyalties and aspirations, as the categories it covers often overlap in terms of age, education, socio-economic status, etc :

> The continuum model has utility for assessing tribal acculturation, but may lead us into . . . error when applied to processes of individual acculturation (McFee 1968 : 1101).

2. Four Examples of Narratives

We can now proceed to a sample of short narratives in order to see how the Mission Metis behave as performers. Robinson (1981 : 62) states that "when there is a discrepancy in the experience of participants, narrators recognize that a performance is required." Similarly, I think that a look at several types of performance should help us probe the various facets of Metis personality revealed to me qua listener

differing in background. When Worth and Adair (1972) encouraged Navajos to construct their own filmed narratives, they elicited a number of observations concerning the Native worldview (e.g., a concern for motion, especially circular), and more particularly their story structure. Thus the Navajos would first present what we consider the "highlight" (e.g., a silversmith working at his bench), then spend about 3/4 of the narrative time showing "auxiliary" activities (e.g., looking for silver and sandstone for molds), and finally go back full circle to the highlight. There was therefore no concern whatsoever for suspense or climax in the White man's sense. There is also a kind of deutero-information that can be extracted from the situated character of narratives ; i.e., from what story is told to whom, when, and for what purpose (Robinson 1981 : 58). In the present case the setting was somewhat artificial, as the ethnographer was the principal listener and his avowed purpose was to keep a record of a dying tradition. However, I learned the basic fact that a typical Mission Metis narrative is always told or sung in French -- otherwise it "wouldn't be Metis" -- as well as learning about several important elements of Metis personality which will be made explicit below. I have thus chosen four examples of didactic, mythical, ludic, and sung narratives that will show "in the flesh" the Mission Metis as performers : i.e., as transmitters of their own experience to their listener's via ritualized media.

2.1. How to Smoke Whitefish.

"On fait une petite loge, comme... un petit pic, là. Puis, euh, bouts de même, là, puis on met des petites parchèzes de même, là. Puis quand on boucane le poisson on les met partout dessus, là, comme ça ;

on les pend. Puis on fait un petit brin de feu en arrière, les petites parchèzes qui sont sèches, là. Puis tu mets un petit bois pourri, là, le bois qui pourrit, là, pour le faire prendre ; puis tu le mets, là, puis il boucane. Ou bien tu peux mettre une toile dessus, là, boucane bien le poisson. C'est comme un... un petit pic, là. Tu fais une petite loge, on l'appelle une petite loge."

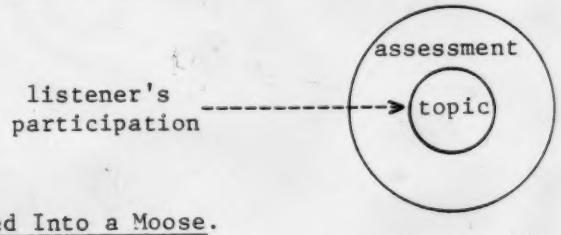
(You build a little lodge like... like a peak. Then, er, other small bits, there, and then you put a few twigs there, too. And when you smoke the fish you put them all over, like this ; just hang them. Then you light a little fire back here, some rotting wood, to make it start ; and you put it there and it smokes. Or else you put a canvas over it, it will smoke the fish good. It's like... a little peak. You build a little lodge, it's called a little lodge.)

This description of a routine activity by Louis (age : 53) gives many details concerning the preparation of the act, but says little about the smoking process itself : as is common in Amerindian narrative or didactic discourse, what seems to us an inordinate amount of time is spent in the "wings" of the staged action. Preston (1975 : 281) put it this way :

> There is a varying but frequent omission of detail or explanation that is expected to be understood. Unity is achieved here by the assumption of shared understandings and by reciprocal participation of the listener.

Bearing in mind that Louis is obviously not used to this kind of description and that practical demonstration is the rule in Metis and Indian interaction, we can represent in the following way the peripheral

treatment of topic characteristic of both groups :



2.2. The Man Changed Into a Moose.

"Ma grand-mère il avait été dans l'Île -- l'Île Bourque, ça s'appellait. Je change tout à c't'heure : c'était un autre nom. Je change tout, je vous dis. Anyway, elle était avec des sauvages dans l'Île, à ramasser des cerises. So... en petit canot d'écorce -- dans ce temps-là y avait pas des gros bateaux, c'était des petits canots d'écorce. And this woman had a little baby, smaller than your little girl there. Elles étaient dans un maillot dans ce temps-là, tu sais qu'un maillot ce que c'est ? Anyway, ils ont mis la petite fille dans le bout du canot, and they pull that little canoe to the... to the shore. Puis ils ont commencé à ramasser des cerises, là. Tout d'un coup, un petit vent, une petite risée de vent, là, a venu. Le canot a parti sur l'eau. So, à peu près, oh, cinq-six minutes, la bonne femme elle se revire puis elle regarde : elle voit le canot pas mal au large. Ah, elle commence à pleurer, she didn't know what to do : her little baby, her little baby ! So there was a man, her husband, was a little ways, you see : he runs at the point of the island, and all at once they see a big moose with his horns and everything (to his son giggling : "This is no bullshit, that's happened too !"). Oh, puis la bonne femme elle voulait se tuer à pleurer. C'te gros moose-là il s'en venait drette au canot : quand il est arrivé au canot, c'était un homme. Il a embarqué dans le canot, il s'en vient là en paddlant, avec le petit bébé... it was her

husband. Ça c'est une histoire vraie. C'est arrivē."

(My grandmother had gone to an island -- Bourque Island, it was called. I change everything these days : it was another name. I'm telling you, I change everything. Anyway, she was with some Indians on the island, busy picking berries. So... in a small bark canoe : in those days there were no big boats, just little bark canoes. And this woman had a little baby, smaller than your little girl there. They were in moss bags in those days, you know what a moss bag is ? Anyway, they put the little girl at one end of the canoe, and they pull that little canoe to the... to the shore. Then they started picking berries. Suddenly a light wind, a little breeze of a wind rose. The canoe left the shore. So after about, oh, five or six minutes the woman turns around and looks : she sees the little canoe a fair distance away. Ah, she begins to cry, she didn't know what to do : her little baby, her little baby ! So there was a man, her husband, was a little ways, you see : he runs to the point of the island, and all at once they see a big moose with his antlers and everything (to his son giggling : "This is no bullshit, that's happened too!"). Oh, and the woman was fit to kill herself crying. That big moose was coming straight to the canoe : when he arrived, it was a man. He boarded the canoe, and here he comes paddling, with the little baby... it was her husband. That's a true story. It happened.)

This unusual event was narrated by Boniface (age : 69) in the presence of his wife and son, who understand French but do not speak it : this situation may explain the inordinate amount of English interferences in the text, unconsciously aimed at allowing them to participate. For Boniface seeks approval from time to time, even though he does not put

forward any personal evaluation of the meaning of the incident, as would be expected in a typical White performance. Boniface is known by the Mission Metis, including his own family, as a "bullshitter" ; i.e., as a great talker who spurns the bounds of likelihood. However, his narrative falls well within the domain of mistapew (spirit helper) and windigo (cannibal spirit) Cree stories, which draw heavily on supernatural elements. The presence of ad hoc factual patchings, the lack of formal structure, and the concern for a climax make this story appear to be a corrupted version of an original Indian story.

2.3. The Bridegroom's Discomfiture.

"Ben je vais en conter une autre, une petite histoire. Mon grand-père, c'était un bon joueur de violon. Oh, c'était un bon... il a enseigné plusieurs icitte. Ça venait de Winnipeg. Ça fait qu'il y avait un nommé Gourneau, il s'est marié avec une fille Hamelin. Et puis c'était ses noces : il était ben assis, et puis ça dansait -- dans ce temps-là c'était des reels à huit, puis des jigs, puis des square dances... Ça fait que... Il va s'asseoir, proche, et puis il s'en va au côté de mon grand-père, puis mon grand-père c'était un homme qui aimait ça, jouer des tricks. Il dit, 'Mon ami, j'ai le mal de ventre ; j'ai une envie de péter.' Il dit, 'Joue fort!' Alors ça dansait -- eh, bonjour! que ça dansait! Et il a levé la fesse, puis quand... mon grand-père il dit : 'Je savais là qu'il pouvait plus l'arrêter, hein, alors...' Alors, il arrête le violon ! Oh, il dit, il a sauté, il a pas pris son compte, il est parti ! C'était le garcon, vous savez, il venait de se marier... Oh, qu'il était... il a arrêté le violon ! Oh, il dit, je pensais qu'il a chié dans sa culotte! Jésus, il prend la porte puis il se pousse

dehors... Ah, ils en fonsaient dans l'ancien temps !"

(Well, I'm going to tell another short story. My grandfather was a good fiddler. Oh, he was good... he taught a few here. He was from Winnipeg. Well, there was this man Gourneau, he was getting married to a Hamelin girl. And it was his wedding : he was sitting, and people were dancing -- in those days it was eight-hand reels, and jigs, and square dances... So he was sitting not too far, and then he comes to my grandfather, and my grandfather was a man who sure liked to play tricks. The groom says, "My friend, I have a stomach ache -- I badly want to fart." And he adds, "Play loud!" So people were dancing, my !were they ever ! And the groom lifted a buttock, and when... as my grandfather says : "I knew he couldn't keep it in any more, you see, so..." So he stopped playing ! Oh, he says, he jumped and left without looking behind ! It was the groom, you see, he'd just got married... Oh, that was... he stopped playing the fiddle ! "Oh," my grandfather said, "I thought he'd shitted in his pants !" Jesus, he headed for the door and made himself scarce... Ah, those were the days !)

This ludic narrative, again by Boniface, is typical of the bawdy stories one still hears after a hearty banquet in the French countryside. Their saturnalian function of relaxing customary restraint is well known, and they normally cover taboo-loaded topics such as the Church, sex, and the excretory functions.

2.4. Vital's Song.

"J'ai tout vendu, jusqu'à mon lit;	(I sold everything, even my bed ;
A présent 'core j'envie d'dormir.	Now I'm still sleepy.
Je m'suis couché dessur la paille,	I've lain down on the straw,

Sur la paille à mon aise,	On the straw for my comfort,
Je dors tranquillement la nuit.	I sleep quietly at night.
Sans père, sans mère ils veillent.	Without father nor mother they wake.
Allons, notre bon père,	Come, our good father,
Dans mon ménage j'ai tout vendu	I've sold out my household
Pour avoir du pourboire.	To have a drink.
A présent 'core j'envie d'dormir.	Now I'm still sleepy.
Je m'suis couché dessur la paille,	I've lain down on the straw,
Sur la paille à mon aise,	On the straw for my comfort,
Je dors tranquillement la nuit."	I sleep quietly at night.)

This sad song was sung for me by Vital (age : 69), a man who recalls bitterly the days of struggle for survival. Unlike most of his peers, he worked extensively away from the mission and has developed a keen awareness of socio-economic exploitation across time : "Aujourd'hui le monde ils ont des belles jobs, puis elles sont nettes, hein : les collets blancs... C'était des jobs salauds, nous autres : à travailler dans les champs, puis à ramasser des racines, puis des roches, et ainsi de suite" (Today people have good jobs, neat and clean -- white collar jobs... As for us, we had dirty jobs : working in the fields, digging up roots and rocks, and all that). No wonder then that this song, whose origin he does not know, focuses on poverty, loneliness, and destitution.

* * * * * * * * *

Although among Mission Metis, as among Naskapi Indians, "status in the sense of an added measure of respect is derived from direct performance" (Leacock 1981 : 40), my informants are as relaxed toward

narrative performance as they are toward general linguistic performance. There exists no formal narrative situation comparable to that prevailing among the Cree (see Darnell 1974) ; and the delivery of stories, effected through the medium of French, is decidedly Gallic in its emotional involvement and context of facial expressions and body movements. Yet the Indian influence is evident in the nature of some topics (e.g., The Man Changed Into a Moose), and their frequently peripheral treatment (e.g., How to Smoke Whitefish) : Mission Metis narratives thus embody the duality characteristic of their performers' personality.

3. Who Are the Mission Metis ?

3.1. Moral vs. Technical Order. The case histories reviewed in the first part of this chapter were mapped onto a continuum of acculturation corresponding closely to a continuum of language use : such a correspondence is inevitable because "from the point of view of the social sciences bilingualism is a type of acculturation, and any interference that occurs is a case of culture diffusion" (Haugen 1956 : 13). In this case the general variable covering both continua (ethnolinguistic variable) was to be found at the macro-level of multilingualism, while micro-level (sociolinguistic) variables such as affrication and vowel raising are available only to those Metis who have not completed the process of acculturation toward monolingualism and "monoculturalism" ; viz., the 30^{+} group.

As social roles are learned in the family, in the peer group, in the school, and at work (Bernstein 1972 : 474), the 30^{-} generation of Mission Metis has available only one context (the family) in which

cultural versatility is the norm : clearly, this one context is not enough for versatility to be integrated into the 30- Metis' process of socialization. In this situation ethnolinguistic drift is tantamount to linguistic change in an ordinary, more homogeneous society : just as "subjective evaluation often precedes and out-runs changes in speech itself" (Labov 1966 : 500), so the fact that some elders stigmatize the "bad" use of too many languages (e.g., Eusèbe, in 1.5. above) foreshadows monolingualism. It is to be noted that Metis women play little part in this development because of their low (or rather, retiring) status and the lack of stylistic variation in the community's repertoire : they thus have no access to the hypercorrection characterizing the desire for upward social mobility in White urban contexts.

No anthropologist, perhaps, has described acculturation in such vivid terms as Redfield, who opposed "moral" to "technical" order in the same way as Scollon and Scollon oppose "bush" to "modern" consciousness, but in a less specific, more philosophical manner. Typically, Redfield (1953 : 110) has this to say about the current supremacy of the technical order :

> The contemporary Western world, now imitated by the Orient, tends to regard the relation of man to nature as a relation of man to physical matter in which application of physical science to man's material comfort is man's paramount assignment on earth.

The aggressive and chrematistic worldview thus defined, concomitant with a culture which bases its dynamism on instability, is directly opposed

to the moral order which governs "genuine" (in Sapir's sense) cultures[2]. Moral order underpins the self-confidence of a non-technological society, its internal integration, and its harmonious relationship with nature ; the latter is not to be conquered but communed with, in an osmotic process where respect, freedom, and individualism receive heavy emphasis. To be sure, the "moral order" characteristic of a "genuine" culture receives preferential treatment from Redfield, and is pitted against the ravages of the "technical order" which governs our Western "spurious" culture : this opposition suffers from an idealism which can be sobered down by pondering, for instance, whether nature was exploited thriftily in the Plains Indians' buffalo jumps. The technical order is thus not as incompatible with the moral order as Redfield believed ; and the "spell of the bush," "call of the wild," etc., have been appreciated on a compromising, part-time basis by Western city-dwellers, and extolled by such successful authors as Jack London, James O. Curwood, Grey Owl, and Louis-Frédéric Rouquette. In recent years we have even seen the genesis of a technical order <u>within</u> the moral order, with the spread of scientifically designed and technologically regulated patterns of bush activities aimed at consumers immersed in modern consciousness.

In the North American context, wilderness is where "one can continually reassert the ability to live on one's resources" (Scollon and Scollon 1979 : 190). In the bush, man comes to terms with himself more readily, as there is no cerebral overload. The environment is so

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2 A "genuine" culture is "merely inherently harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory" (Sapir 1924 : 314) ; a "spurious" culture has antipodal attributes.

self-contained that "any adult knows the whole repertoire" (Denny 1981 : 2) : there is less actual work than in the industrial society, no specialization, no hierarchy -- the only requisite is inclusive knowledge of nature. Listening to traditional Mission Metis telling of their initiation into bush lore by their fathers when in their early or mid-teens, one understands that the experience was a definite rite of passage, which has since been smothered by the pervasive requirements of the technical order. Also noteworthy is the fact that it was at that time of initiation into bush lore that those Metis who later became fiddle players took their father's or uncle's fiddle and started practicing on their own the skills leading to the swift, totally unschooled Metis style.

This general attitude of independence is linked with the widespread prestige of the hunter among Native societies of North America, especially on the Plains where "the idealized image of the warrior hunter effectively barred easy transition to the life of plough farmer" (Voget 1975 : 644). It stands therefore in drastic contrast with the farmer's typically negative opinion of the bush, such as the one held on St. Vincent (West Indies), where the bush is identified with insanity and "unnatural" sexual acts, and "stands for total disorder, from the agricultural and the social points of view" (Abrahams 1981 : 49-50). Among those traditional societies which value the bush positively, a complete reversal of attitudes is required of those who wish to adapt to modern consciousness and technical order ; otherwise there results a generation gap difficult to bridge, of the kind concretely described by Levy for modern Tahiti :

> The children wander everywhere and see how others live. They want such lives for themselves. They want money and clothes and motorbikes. They laugh at the himene tarava and the old customs. They do not respect or listen to their parents. But when they do ask questions, for example about schoolwork, the parents cannot help them (Levy 1973 : 507).

The demands of the modern world are thus often contrary to the values of the moral order ; and, where kinship ties alone provided identity and mutual aid, required now are new kinds of associations borne out of contract labor, ethnic association membership, etc. In the case of the Canadian Metis, such associations have produced a political élite which was badly needed for smoothing out the inevitable passage of the more traditional communities into the technical order. In the last twenty years, with increased opportunity for militancy, these leaders have tried to pull back to them the old moral order and to incorporate the new technical order, with an aim to "have the best of both worlds." It is not impossible, though, that Metis identity is so much an integral part of this cultural transition that it may vanish with the forthcoming neutralization of the latter : in other words, the meaningful ways of life synthesized around newly introduced forms may well estrange the Metis from their distinctive heritage born out of frontier conditions of conflict between moral and technical order.

3.2. Criteria of Identification. Isolated Metis communities characterized by a high level of endogamy probably contain the best representatives of the "ideal Metis," an individual supposedly endowed with physical attributes superior to those of the mean parental populations, as well

as with great personal vitality and buoyancy (see for instance the apocryphal stories surrounding such colorful figures as James McKay, Jerry Potts, or Gabriel Dumont, in Sealey and Lussier 1975 : 101ff). This ideal Metis type would thus be a perfect example of the still controversial phenomenon of hybrid vigor, or heterosis.

On the one hand it seems well established in physical anthropology that exogamy brings about an increase in overall body size (Damon 1965), perhaps because exogamous individuals are more heterozygous and heterozygotes are believed to be more adaptable, their genetic configuration allowing them to exploit their environment more efficiently. On the other hand, heterosis in animal crosses is "usually manifested to its fullest extent by the first filial generation" (Trevor 1953 : 26), and in the human case of Mongoloid/Caucasoid miscegenation there is generally Mongoloid dominance after the first few generations (Olivier 1964). It must also be noted that the breakdown of genetic isolates leading to heterosis may be accompanied in some cases by negative changes in physiological responses such as increased systolic blood pressure with age (Kirk 1981 : 146).

It seems reasonable to assume that the mean body development of a first generation hybrid group, when expressed through anthropometric measurements, will be significantly superior to the parental average (Hiernaux and Heintz 1967) ; but this increased development is likely to fluctuate in the following generations according to such intervening factors as selective mating and differential death rates. Bearing this restriction in mind, it appears that "the hybrid series in general have a greater degree of non-European than of European ancestry" (Trevor 1953 :

31), and that heterosis in Mongoloid/Caucasoid miscenegenation is marked by an apparent enlargement of the head, characterized by a greater cephalic index, and an increase in trunk size (sitting height).

It was not the purpose of this research to carry out an anthropometric study of the Mission Metis : such a study would in any case have been detrimental to an ethnography based on participant observation ; but it may be mentioned that males are generally above Euro-Canadian average in stature (especially as regards French Canadians) -- a fact commented upon by many early observers (see e.g., De Trémaudan 1979 : 33, 47) -- and that their build is mesomorph with pyknic tendency. It is also very common for Caucasoid-looking Metis to have children exhibiting strong recessive Mongoloid phenotypic traits. The personal vitality and cultural adaptability of the Metis have already been mentioned in conjunction with their history and their linguistic economy, and tend to confirm this somewhat impressionistic picture of the Mission Metis as a manifestation of heterosis. Of course, some of these characteristics would apply equally well to numerous contemporary Indians, few of whom are genetically pure Natives (Card et al. 1963 : 187).

Now, considering that the Mission Metis are good physical representatives of the typical French-Algonquian Canadian halfbreeds, who are the Mission Metis ? that is, how can we single them out as a group from the Lac La Biche ethnic mosaic ? Even though their community is now so dispersed that its structure is supported only by very loose bonds, the Mission Metis are by no means one of those "ethnographic fictions" deplored by Leach (1970 : 291) : they exist primarily as Mission Metis because they identify themselves as such, in the same way

as in the Northwest Territories "the definition of the Dene is the right of the Dene. The Dene know who they are" (Jamieson 1978 : 90). They also form a linguistic community responding to Gumperz's (1971b : 101) definition of the entity as "held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication" -- the latter weaknesses being replaced in this case by the presence of stereotypes applied to the Mission Metis by outsiders. A community is rarely bounded by fences and signposts : it is more often shaped by the overlap of adjacent cultural continua of social organization, language, dress, diet, etc ; so that "for some purposes it is necessary to view every social entity as but part of a larger system which includes its neighbors" (Moerman 1965 : 1216). A good example of a Native community imbricated in a vast array of cultures, yet continuing to exist, is provided by the Turtle Mountain halfbreeds of the San Francisco Bay area in California (Ablon 1964). Of French Canadian and Algonquian descent, they are described as "lively and verbal" ; and still using Chippewa, Cree, French, as well as English, among themselves. Also, they

> often comment that because they are mixed-bloods, they are not like other Indians and do not maintain traditional customs or dances. They associate largely with other Turtle Mountain families or with Whites. Few have established relationships with Indians of other tribes (Ablon 1964 : 298).

Such a phenomenon of identity survival in the midst of impending absorption weakens Hatt's (1969 : 20) contention that "the social definition of Metis is based on physical traits, on surname, on

occupation, and on place of residence," and subordinates it to a more powerful factor -- perception of identity. Certainly this is how the Mission Metis conceive of themselves as a community in spite of their dispersion and the declining religious and social role of the Oblate mission. Like the Mexican town of Tepoztlán in 1943, the Mission Metis of today can be described as "a community with incipient social stratification which will probably become intensified with the greater contacts with the outside, the increased wealth, and greater occupational specialization" (Lewis 1960 : 39). However, because the Mission community does not coincide with a town's boundaries it will disintegrate as soon as the mission is, both literally and figuratively, lost from sight. This fate is all the more ineluctable since the Church has merely protected the Mission Metis and has not prepared them for emancipation, so that their identity cannot survive the death of the mission. This issue sets them markedly apart from other Native communities, such as the Papago of southern Arizona, where the Church has had a progressive influence (Wilson 1972 : 23).

To come back to our initial question, Who are the Mission Metis ? the answer seems to be : they are a transient phenomenon totally dependent for their identity on the institution which brought them where they are and is now dissolving, letting them be slowly absorbed by the dominant social group. When nobody in the Lac La Biche region is perceived as a Mission Metis any longer, the community will have ceased to exist, regardless of the distinctive physical and social traits which may have survived in some of its descendants.

CHAPTER VI

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

1. Mission Metis Culture

1.1. A Culture of Poverty ?

> If something could happen. What ? What ? What could happen ? For what ? About what ? (Hubert Selby : Last Exit to Brooklyn, 1957, p. 126).

> Annie Mae watches up at the ceiling, and she is as sick with sleep as if she had lain the night beneath a just-supportable weight : and watching up into the dark, beside her husband, the ceiling becomes visible, and watching into her eyes, the weight of the day (James Agee and Walker Evans : Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, 1941, p. 82).

Ethnolinguistics has been used in this study as a means of investigating the culture change undergone by Mission Metis since the end of the 19th century when, as in any pre-industrialized society, there prevailed a context where "incentives to work and to exchange labor and goods . . . arise from tradition, from a sense of obligation coming out of one's position in a system of status relationship" (Redfield 1953 : 11). The first half of the 20th century was marked for the Mission Metis by a "culture of poverty" of the type described by Lewis (1959) in Mexico, by Campbell (1973) for the Saskatchewan Metis, and by my own

informants in the Lac La Biche region. At the beginning of the 1960's isolated Metis communities started to feel the pressure of White industrialized society (see Chapter 2), and the distinction between those who were and those who were not able or willing to produce labor to support an industrial economy began to spread along the age continuum. In these conditions, can we talk about a "culture of poverty" as applying to Mission Metis ? Further, is this concept acceptable at all ?

As is suggested by the two literary quotations at the beginning of this chapter, the notion of cultural vacuum has been with us for some time ; but it was Lewis (1959 : 16) who gave it a semblance of academic rigor by incorporating it into the concept of a culture of poverty, viz., a class cultural value system marked by subsistence living, ignorance, an amorphous concern for the future, and a conviction that education is not so important as know-how ; the mental set thus acquired was found to be persistent enough to be carried over into nouveau riche status. Seen in this light, and as popularized by Lewis' followers during the American "war on poverty" of the 1960's and early 1970's, poverty became conceptualized as a way of life characterized by stupefied acceptance of cultural deprivation.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the richness of a culture or subculture devoid of much appeal to the investigator is the hardest to discover. The "culture of poverty" has thus joined the ranks of Bernstein's (1970), "restricted code" and the more general issues raised by the IQ controversy -- all concepts suffering from both a less than intimate acquaintance with the group under analysis and an evaluation of its little-known intimate patterns by questionable Western

middle-class standards. One should bear in mind that without a knowledge of the proper cultural etiquette the outsider is likely to find a community "taciturn, vaguely hostile, and giving all the appearances of dullness and stupidity" (von Sturmer 1981 : 25) -- especially if this community is in an inferior position in terms of power relationships.

Valentine (1971 : 208-9) has argued that traits normally associated with the culture of poverty, such as flexible standards of legitimacy, are phenomena of efficient adaptation to adverse conditions imposed from the outside. This particular trait is not applicable to the Mission Metis, among whom common-law marriage and illegitimacy were practically unknown until the present 30- generation due to the awesome presence of the mission ; but lack of gratification deferral is another feature which is still in effect and is best viewed as an optimal strategy for exploiting an environment with limited resources.

This is not to say that the symptoms described for the culture of poverty cannot have a pernicious effect on individual development and behavior. For instance Griffin (1960 : 48), passing as a Negro in New Orleans in the heyday of racial discrimination, gives this vivid description of the consequences of the urban poverty that engulfed him :

> Existence becomes a grinding effort, guided by belly-hunger and the almost desperate need to divert awareness from the squalors to the pleasures, to lose oneself in sex or drink or dope or gut-religion or gluttony or the incoherence of falsity.

There even seems to be a biological basis to the observed self-perpetuation of defective conditions for individual development : as

at least two of the brain's neurotransmitters, serotonin and acetylcholine, are heavily dependent on dietary intake (Restak 1979 : 134) ; and protein-calorie deficiencies in the perinatal and post-weaning periods can lead to permanent brain impairment (Dobbing 1967 : passim ; Foster and Anderson 1978 : 263), of the type which culminates in kwashiorkor in tropical regions. All these observations point to the objective existence of socio-biological problems brought about by conditions of poverty ; but by the same token we should not feel free to posit the existence of an autonomous "culture" of poverty, and thereby give cultural status to a broad range of individual responses which are far from adaptive. This stance is tantamount to unloading social responsibility on the underdog. The Church did just that in the 19th century, when its position was that "pauperism was due to idleness, improvidence, and vice" (Evans-Pritchard 1962 : 40). More generally, we must agree with Valentine (1971 : 215) that "blaming poverty on the poor has long appealed to comfortable and affluent groups."

Poverty cultures are not "genuine" (in Sapir's sense), but entirely symptomatic : change the living conditions, and the socialization process will immediately respond and transmit a modified culture to the next generation. The Mission Metis physically suffered from poverty, but religious fervor and the practical authority of the mission prevented them from being absorbed into anything like the despondency associated with cultures of poverty. In so far as it can be taken seriously, Bloomfield's (1928 : xii) description of the Menomini as suffering from a cultural loss which they bore "with a wistful resignation" could not apply to the Mission Metis at any point in their history. It is hoped

that the present study has been clear in demonstrating that any change (linguistic or other) occurring in Mission Metis culture has involved substitution, not loss, of elements.

It is only at the macro-level of analysis of Mission Metis culture within the general context of Canadian cultures that a loss can be diagnosed, and this is no less than the loss of this particular culture from the Canadian scene ; individuals per se are not concerned, as succeeding generations have been gradually socialized into a new worldview and new socio-economic expectations. The increasing importance of White-controlled health care and welfare systems in Metis life is a case in point ; from a Native perspective, the dominant society views the ideal individual as

> a White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, healthy, ambitious, earnest, and honest, a man whom the Lord smiles upon by increasing the fruits of his labor. Welfare is designed to compensate people insofar as they deviate from that norm (Deloria 1969 : 190).

Successive generations of Mission Metis have progressively adapted to this pattern, so that the culture as a whole has escaped what economic anthropologists refer to as "growth without development" (Dalton 1969 : 89) ; i.e., the introduction of cash unaccompanied by such cultural changes as new technology, literacy, etc. In this way the Mission culture is being assimilated into that of the lower class of the dominant society (in terms of education, but not necessarily of income), at a tempo parallel to the older generations' death rate ; and its offspring are undergoing the growth with development characteristic of the mainstream of Albertan society since the 1960's, when many non-Mission Metis had

already passed into the lower-class Euro-Canadian value system (Card et al. 1963 : 353).

1.2. Worldview. The present study has stressed the fact that the Canadian Metis is a genetic and cultural hybrid leaning now toward the White side, now toward the Indian side, with perhaps an overall preference for the latter. It is now time to situate the Mission Metis' worldview, in the same way as we have already situated their ethnic, socio-historical, and linguistic characteristics.

The validity of the Standard Average European or SAE (Whorf 1939) conceptual framework as a universal standard of evaluation of other human mental sets has not yet been seriously challenged outside the field of anthropology. SAE is the sum of "those large subsummations of experience by (European languages), such as our terms 'time,' 'space,' 'substance,' 'matter,'" (Whorf 1939 : 138) ; in other words, it is the product of shared ethnohistory which colors the general Western European worldview and has been tacitly accepted as universal standard since the beginnings of European expansion and colonialism. Many psychologists in particular seem unable to go beyond what can be termed "cross-cultural ethnocentrism," an attitude where concern for the variety of logical representations in the human mind receives mere lip service. In an Australian aboriginal community, for instance, after a battery of psychometric tests had been applied it was found that

> there was a consistent and strong direct relationship between classificatory performance and the degree of contact with Europeans and their technology . . . If the present findings are shown to replicate, it could be argued that the interests of the optimal cognitive

> development of Aboriginal children would best be served by ensuring that they should in the future be reared near or even integrated with substantial European settlements (De Lacey 1970 : 363-5).

This modern patronizing attitude is not far removed from the 19th century Canadian missionary's concern for his "poor Indians." More subtle but equally unproductive is the apparent lack of awareness, on the part of otherwise sensitive investigators, that they are using the egocentrism typical of an educated Westerner as point of reference in the study of people who, for socio-economic reasons, are unlikely to express more than non-committal group feelings outside of the family circle. For an outstanding example of this conceptualization, we must now turn to the Russian psychologist A.R. Luria.

In 1931-32 Luria carried out an investigation in Uzbekistan (USSR), among people who were passing from the illiteracy and graphic thinking the Soviets associate with feudalism, into the educational and theoretical pursuits supposedly favored by a socialist revolution. This fieldwork was strongly biased from the outset :

> Our experiments could succeed only if they adequately reflected the major differences in the thinking of people at different stages of socio-historical development, and could thus reveal a pattern or syndrome (Luria 1976 : 17).

This developmental interpretation of the discrepancy observed between "cognitive stages," together with the inevitable sycophantic tribute to Soviet efficiency, has marred the author's concern for objective evaluation and led to a few naive conclusions. For instance : "Once people acquire education, they make increasingly greater use of

categorization to express ideas that objectively reflect reality" (ibid. : 99) ; further, their outlook is broadening into a "world in which human beings begin to live" (ibid. : 163). It did not seem to occur to Luria that the lack of generalization and abstraction he observed in the thought processes of non-reformed illiterate peasants may have been an adaptive strategy born out of a long history of oppression by outsiders. This explanation is supported by the tendency shown by these peasants to assume that the objects or cards presented together by the psychologist had ipso facto a good reason to belong together, as the authorities are seldom wrong... For example, one of the peasants is shown a drawing of four objects -- bird, rifle, dagger, bullet -- and decides :

> -- All these things go together.
> -- But these are weapons. What about the swallow ?
> -- No, it's not a weapon.
> -- So that means these three go together and the swallow doesn't ?
> -- No, the bird has to be there too, otherwise there'll be nothing to shoot (Luria 1976 : 57).

Whether the peasant's interpretation was sincere or not, he provides here an example of functional, instead of categorical, association ; that Luria does not challenge the superiority of the latter is made clear by his assertion that the goal of revolutionary education is to impart thinking "divorced from immediate practical experience" (ibid. : 133). But again, why should one share his deeper, more abstract thinking with a prying stranger who is potentially threatening ? Seen in this light, could not what Luria interprets as a cognitive development from ignorance

to enlightenment be merely a reorientation of worldview under propitious circumstances ?

A similar lack of comprehension marks the following description of a man's leisure time among the Amahuaca Indians of Peru :

> He just sits doing nothing, looking at nothing, and, I'm sure, thinking about nothing. In a society . . . where the concept of spending time doesn't exist since there is nothing to spend it on, there is no alternative but to go blank (Huxley and Capa 1964 : 88).

This astonishingly ethnocentric picture betrays a complete ignorance of the value of silence and meditation in non-technological cultures, where "just plain sitting is doing something" (Hall 1959 : 178). It also fails to recognize an attitude very aptly summed up in Lips's (1966 : 155) remark : "Time ! Why measure a thing of which there (is) always enough ?" Here we touch on a concept which is essential to any definition of Mission Metis worldview, as they share it with most North American Natives as well as many other non-urbanized peoples -- viz., the concept of "Indian time."

For people socialized into the mainstream of European tradition, time represents "something that occurs between two points" (Hall 1959 : 171) ; and the Indo-European languages have developed very intricate patterns around this linear concept (see e.g., Bull 1963 for Spanish). On the other hand "Indian time" is characterized by a constant flowing of actors and events, with little sequencing and few discrete units of activity. It is difficult for Whites to plan and make arrangements with Natives, as "non-Indians are not clear on when they can come and go,

and accordingly feel less comfortable with the unpredictable fow of activities" (Philips 1974 : 107) ; similarly, among the Yolngu of Arnhem Land, even though a ceremony "involves much planning, no one can be sure what day or week it will actually begin" (S.G. Harris 1976 : 24). This fluidity of interaction is concurrent with an absence of profane/sacred dualism in the culture's thought-world, and a lack of compartmentalization in its social relationships (exemplified among Indians and Metis by the paucity of greeting phrases, which would modify unduly the quality of a relationship and segment its immanent force). "Indian time" is but one manifestation of a worldview which extends the concept of flow to all aspects of life and allows a situation to mature before it is exploited. This policy of minimal intervention is possibly connected with directional thinking (the ideal of Zen and Yoga philosophies), as opposed to associational thinking (the ideal of Western philosophy) : the former leads one to a sudden realization of reality, while the latter provides step-by-step understanding (see Watts 1958 : 65ff).

Among the Metis and those Indians exposed to multicultural contact, fluidity of interaction is accompanied by fluidity of identity. Scollon and Scollon (1979 : 227), for instance, stress the constant shift between Cree and Chipewyan identities among a mixed Native community, according to marriage patterns and the prevalence of a particular language under certain circumstances. This tendency may have been reinforced by the legal possibility to choose one's affiliation, illustrated for instance by one of my informants, a non-Mission Metis whose father chose to be Metis but whose uncle opted for life on an Indian reserve. As Fisher (1981 : 40) puts it :

> The decision made at treaty time between taking treaty or scrip was entirely up to the individual because the Indians and Halfbreeds lived similarly and might choose to be treated either as Indian or Halfbreed.

Temporal fluidity, or Indian time, operates cross-culturally and is characteristic of certain segments of Western populations as well as of more exotic groups. The Norman peasant in France, for example, is notorious for his apparent slowness and procrastination ; the fisherman of western Ireland is even closer to the American Indian as regards the integration of time into his daily life ; and even a perfectly Euro-Canadian institution such as the railway train between Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray can be under the influence of this phenomenon, with its employees cooperating fully with their patrons (most of them of Native ancestry) in getting ready for departure when "things are ripe" -- i.e., when there is tacit agreement between employees and patrons that the wait has reached its apex and must now topple over into the next course of action. This fluidity thus seems to be a characteristic of small isolated communities whose social organization lacks any rigid categorization of activities ; it also seems to go hand in hand with non-literacy (Lord 1960 : 100), or at least -- as in the Mission Metis case -- with an absence of concern for literacy. Sapir (1931) had already stressed that interaction in small pre-industrial communities is necessarily different from interaction in literate societies because of the greater amount of shared knowledge obtaining in the former.

In terms of Lee's (1981 : 18) categorization of communal and class-based modes of production, traditional Mission Metis straddle both

modes : they are involved in foraging and simple farming with a band level of social organization, but they also represent a tributary organization which pays (or paid) rent to the Oblate Order and must meet a number of obligations (going to mass, helping with odd chores, formerly sending their children to the mission school, etc). Its largely communalistic mode of production has kept this society egalitarian. The major status ever achieved is correlated to age ; and, as among the Cree, some kind of interactional control is residual to the persons of higher status (see Darnell 1980 : 4). In this way egalitarianism produces temporal fluidity through the decision-making process, as noted by Leacock, who was struck by

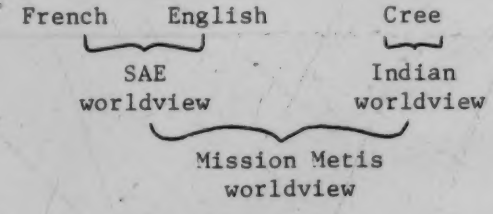
> the elusive nature of the continual effort on the part of the (Montagnais) Indians to operate together unanimously, but informally, in the direction of the greatest individual satisfaction without direct conflict of interest . . . Some decisions are apparently not made until the last minute (Leacock 1981 : 72).

This attitude has survived among the sedentary Mission Metis ; and has been more than tolerated by their Oblate cadres, some of whom have become "contaminated" (as often happens on the reserves) and have adopted this alien lifestyle to the chagrin or amusement of their superiors.

In such a context, among Mission Metis and Indians alike, action leaders are never taken too seriously, and lose their power as soon as they try to enforce it. This fact can be interpreted as a proof that "autonomy as a valued principle persists to a striking degree among the descendants of hunter-gatherers" (Leacock 1981 : 139). However, rather than considering it a purely ethnic trait, I am inclined to take a

broader cross-cultural perspective and view this autonomy (linked as it is with interactional fluidity) as a feature of small egalitarian-minded social groups, where the amount of shared knowledge is greatest and equality is therefore felt to be a social due. In the fun fairs of rural Europe, for example, leaders are there to keep things from becoming too chaotic ; but they are quickly ridiculed if they get "carried away" and go beyond their prescribed limited authority. After all, the adage, "No one is a prophet in his own country," betrays a deeply ingrained, seemingly universal attitude to the effect that "in all societies people fear, and hence dislike and distrust, their fellows who exercise power, potential or real, over them" (Foster and Anderson 1978 : 114). This notion explains the common ambiguous attitude, obtaining in urbanized societies to a lesser extent than in rural ones, toward curers, doctors, political leaders, or simply anybody who rises from the rank.

As a conclusion it can be said that Mission Metis worldview is composite and based on a bipartite configuration which involves a triadic medium of expression :



It has been shown in this section that as far as social interaction is concerned, Mission Metis share in the general Indian configuration of fluidity, and are therefore at odds with the Standard Average European worldview. Another example of Native pattern, this time concerning an ideal of behavior, was brought home to me when I asked

several informants my version of Labov's well-known question designed to elicit spontaneous (informal or excited) speech, "Have you ever been in a situation in the bush where you were in danger of being killed ?" (see Labov 1972c : 92ff). With disappointing regularity, all answered no. Only later did I realize that no good woodsman (in Native terms) would put himself in danger of death -- a fact encountered by Basso (1972) in his study of the Fort Norman Slave -- and that to acknowledge that such an incident did happen would be tantamount to confessing carelessness. This reaction is a far cry from the typical European reaction which consists in emphasizing, or even exaggerating, the amount of danger that has been escaped in order to qualify the exceptional luck with which one has been invested.

2. Representativeness vs. Marginality

2.1. Survival of Native Patterns. Anthropological research has made it clear that a surface structure of modernity often masks a traditional deep structure. Lewis (1951), for example, found that Tepoztecans had taken on only superficial aspects of modern life, their worldview being still basically Aztec. Hallowell (1967 : 351) found among acculturated Ojibwas "no evidence at all of fundamental psychological transformation." Gruhn (1980 : 17) notes that the Apinayé, a Gê-speaking people of Brazil, have long dwelt in settlements with a rectangular layout, but when asked by anthropologist R. Da Matta to draw their concept of the community village they uniformly produced a now extinct, traditional circular layout. In Australia, Sansom (1980) has demonstrated that Aboriginal fringe dwellers are still "traditional" Aborigines in their emphasis

on shared experience with their consociates. Among Mission Metis the family is still patrifocal, as befits "people who live (or have recently lived) by direct acquisition of wild products" (Leacock 1981 : 62) : for them as for other such people, the norm is to be "strongly egalitarian, but with an edge in favor of male authority and influence" (ibid.). The survival of traditional ways and beliefs is also visible among the 30^{+} generations in their half-hearted belief in windigos and the continued reliance on Native remedies such as bear's fat, otherwise widely used by North American Indians as an embrocation (Vogel 1970 : passim), to fight alopecia.

This persistence of native patterns operates even in cities, where, urbanized and acculturated as they may be, many Natives still feel they are Natives -- so that "the adjustments most Indians make in learning the cues for living successfully in the White world seem to be superficial to their established basic personality structures" (Ablon 1964 : 303). This situation is most discernible perhaps at the level of language, where one may be monolingual in a dominant European language and still operate within a traditional conceptual framework. For instance, Australian Aborigines are still aboriginal even if they have not retained their traditional languages (see Sansom 1980, Eades 1981). Darnell has also noted this fact about the Cree :

> Cree English retains a basically Cree semantic system and is used in Cree interactional contexts. Language code is, then, a trivial determinant of communicative effectiveness (Darnell 1982 : 4).

Similarly, I have personally observed that rural Irish people whose parents did not even speak Gaelic still speak a variety of English

(Hiberno-English) which uses Gaelic constructions and intonation, as well as many Gaelic words ; however, the hypostatic worldview thus expressed fades away with each new generation of speakers, together with the distinctive flavor of the language that carries it. In the Aborigine, Cree, Irish, and Mission Metis cases there has been cultural compounding instead of replacement among the elders -- with a relentless waning of traditional characteristics among the younger generations.

This consideration leads us to take a more critical look at the conventional model of acculturation. In an important paper concerning the existence of "150% efficient" bicultural Blackfeet people, McFee (1968) argues that continua of acculturation assume cultural replacement and do not account for the compounding of "contradictory" cultural traits ; instead of continua, he tends to favor discontinuous categories of Blackfeet with various blendings of White-oriented and Indian-oriented attitudes. However, in the same way as I have recognized a continuum of multilingualism, McFee's analysis refers in the end to a general continuum of biculturalism : at one pole we find young men rating low on both White and Indian cultural scales, somewhat reminiscent of Bloomfield's (1928) "deprived" Menomini (but see Labov 1970b for the opinion that deprivation lies rather with the investigator's lack of empathy) ; at the other pole are older individuals rating high on both scales (150%) and actively involved in both cultures. McFee calls the latter interpreters : they correspond to the group Worth and Adair (1972 : 112) define as "intermediaries between the outsiders and the more conservative members of their own social group." This term is close to my own definition of Mission Metis as cultural brokers, with the

difference that the individuals concerned are aware of their importance (among my informants, only Magloire could be called an interpreter, as he played this part in a film designed to interpret the Metis ways to a White audience -- see Chapter 5, 1.3.). Moreover, Adrian Hope's already quoted characterization of the Metis as potential heirs to "the best of both worlds" -- a notion widely used in Metis and "Fourth World" literature (e.g. Daniels 1979, Manuel and Posluns 1974, Sealey and Lussier 1975) -- establishes the official status of traditional Mission Metis as a group of cultural brokers.

Mission Metis are losing this qualification because : a) they are shedding multilingualism, hence jeopardizing multiculturalism for the following generations ; b) the elders have a knowledge of the White world that "froze" before the advent of such important agents of change as computer technology and counter-culture revolution, a situation which means they are not efficient brokers any more ; and c) if social pressure from above affects all Mission Metis, social pressure from below (attraction to bush consciousness) concerns mainly the elders and thereby creates the effective disharmony described throughout the preceding chapter. This is not to say that bush consciousness cannot persist without its traditional socio-economic base, associated with independent commodity producers : rather, it is likely to survive by melting gradually into the developing White consumer-oriented bush consciousness.

2.2. Group Marginality. Goldberg (1941 : 52) defines a marginal area as "a region where two cultures overlap and where the occupying group partakes of the traits of both cultures." When, moreover, a group adds

to these characteristics a lack of legal and cultural recognition, one can truly define it as marginal : the Canadian Metis thus obviously belong to this category. Unlike the Jews' marginality, which is institutionalized and based on the notion of cutting oneself off from the dominant culture, Metis marginality has been historically imposed and consists in participating in two subcultures (Indian and French), as well as in the dominant culture. In Goldberg's (ibid. : 58) terms Jewish culture has a competitive basis, whereas Metis culture is accommodative. The passive character of Metis marginality must not be overemphasized, however : if they do not stand out as a group with clear-cut socio-geographical boundaries, the Metis individually base their identity on physical, linguistic, and social conspicuousness -- or, to use Bateson's (1958) terms, on a trilateral eidos and a syncretic ethos, both of which are marked by transiency.

It being established that Canadian Metis are generally marginal, what about the Mission Metis in particular ? In view of the constant influence of the Church as the founding agent of the Mission community (see Chapter 2), it is not surprising that this group has remained outside the current Metis manifestations of militancy and irredentism. This position is precisely what makes Mission Metis so interesting -- their very secluded self-contained environment has effectively preserved traditional behavior patterns, still visible in the elders. Historically, they have been marginals among marginals, appearing as 19th-century Church-guided interlopers when the mainstream of the Lac La Biche Metis population has its roots in late 18th century settlements. The community, underpinned as it was by missionary zeal, has not yielded to anomie as is

frequently observed in Metis colonies or urban communities ; and the passage of the younger generation into the dominant society is being effected rather smoothly. This situation has been reinforced by the preponderance of nuclear households on which the Church has direct influence, as opposed to the extended families prevalent on Metis colonies (see e.g. Hatt 1969 : 22), which hardly lend themselves to easy manipulation by outside authorities.

Individual marginality can also be expected to arise from the fact that Mission Metis households have been relocated -- except for the one elderly couple still living on mission land -- and that young people more and more move to distant job-sites. The areal explosion of the community since the 1960's has resulted in a diffuse type of cohesion similar to that found by Bennett in a Cree band of southern Saskatchewan, where

> there was an amorphous sense of group identity defined largely in terms of the discrimination and segregation patterns practiced by Whites against the Indians, and implemented by common language and culture, and mechanisms of free sharing and transfer of possessions (Bennett 1969 : 157).

Those "discrimination and segregation patterns," however, do not apply to the Mission Metis, who, like the Natives settled in the San Francisco Bay area of California, are part of a larger society whose ethnic diversity precludes gross discrimination (see Ablon 1964 : passim). Instead, Mission Metis group identity is defined by the "feeling of being different" brought about by distinct ethnohistorical and linguistic patterns.

Individual marginality is also expressed cogently in drinking behavior (Graves 1971) ; but whereas the Indian drinks in very conspicuous public places and the non-Indian often drinks at home (Garbarino 1971 : 194), the Mission Metis tends to go to the bar/dancing section, rather than the lounge, of the drinking establishment. There he sits at the back of the room, outside the circle of light and noise which forms the focus of attention. As for drinking parties at home, they occur only among those Mission Metis placed at the periphery of Church-attendance patterns. The three groups (Indians, Whites, and Metis) thus make different uses of alcohol as a "boundary marker that can be used within a single society to help frame a variety of situations" (Hill 1978 : 465).

Goldberg (1941 : 53) argues that the negative attributes of the marginal man, supposedly torn between two cultures and a misfit to both, disappear when he participates in a marginal culture : in other words, marginality ceases to exist de facto through sheer number, the individual then being no longer forced to define the situation by himself. He thus becomes a culturally valid entity whose "marginal" mental set is now shared by others and incorporated into the collective process of socialization. "Marginal man" and "marginal culture" are therefore two mutually exclusive concepts. Once a few would-be marginal individuals get together, there is interaction ; this situation is likely to lead to schismogenesis, "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behavior resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals" (Bateson 1958 : 175). Schismogenesis thus creates variation, the basis of social intercourse ; and there results a full-fledged human community

whose very existence precludes its members from being marginal. This process can be considered to underpin the formation of a "genuine" culture or subculture ; and, as it applies to traditional Mission Metis, it gives them full status of communal integrity. Indeed, in the absence of authoritative evidence, it makes them representative of what most rural Metis communities gathered around Roman Catholic missions must have been like until the 1960's.

3. Envoi

3.1. Micro- and Macro-Ethnicity. Gold (1980) describes micro-ethnicity as "these private, non-institutionalized and situational contexts within which and around which ethnic boundaries are constructed by groups or quasi-groups." As applied to the present study, the major identity-maintenance factors operating in the Mission community are those non-institutionalized social networks revolving around visiting, fishing, hunting, and trapping, which function as loci for micro-ethnic behavior. Macro-ethnic issues such as Metis militancy and land claims are perforce subordinate, due to the long influence of the Church and the concomitant absence of settlement problems. This situation is in sharp contrast with the neighboring Metis settlements of Caslan and Kikino, where nation-wide macro-ethnicity backed by a clearer sense of Metis history is immediately perceptible to the outsider. As a focus of traditional Metis social life, the mission complex could be compared to the Iroquois longhouse, which dispensed the rituals, social activities, and moral education necessary to the community (M. Foster 1974 : 24ff). It also created a situation parallel to that obtaining in Ireland, where the strongest informal

social control is the Catholic Church ; however, Mission Metis identity and ethnicity can be studied without the religious determinism which necessarily arises when one investigates Irish rural society (see e.g., Messenger 1969 : 59ff).

A distinction between two levels of ethnicity is important in this case, as the Mission Metis are particularized by their position in a geographic enclave which gives them a distinct sense of identity not shared by outlying Metis groups. The mission itself can be considered a focus of micro-ethnicity with both positive and negative reflections of Metis-ness : those Métis attached to traditional values live near the mission or at least talk about it as their former home, while those who have dissociated themselves from this background never mention the mission as a focal point of identification, and seem to regard their Metis identity as a burden they wish to discard. "Ethnicity is impermanent in that individuals, communities and areas change their identification," comments Moerman (1965 : 1222), before wondering "how much change in the nuclear institution can occur before ethnic identification disappears" (ibid.). The answer seems to be that micro- or macro-ethnic identification survives as long as there is a community -- however small -- and as long as the institution on which it depends maintains a semblance of functional value. Since the beginning of the fieldwork on which this study is based (summer 1979), the mission has steadily lost more of its importance, so that there is now (1982) no resident Oblate missionary and mass is said there only once a month. In spite of this severe attrition, the surrounding Metis still identify with the mission, and will continue to do so until it closes down

completely and the last elder dies.

As a micro-ethnic group the Mission Metis are bound to the other Canadian Metis more than at any other time in their history, through macro-ethnic institutions such as the Albertan Metis Association and the Native Council of Canada, which reach out to them to a varying degree via the mass media. Also they have participated -- if only remotely -- in Metis macro-ethnicity since it became cohesive in the 19th century, when the Canadian Metis emerged from the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes trading system tradition and moved westward after Indian/White marriages had established "the kinship basis necessary for trading activity" (J. Foster 1979 : 82ff). Whether it applied to the Metis as provisioners (Plains hunters, fishermen), indentured workers (engagés), or community producers (members of settled or semi-settled communities), this macro-ethnicity has always been correlated to multilateral interaction with Algonquian and French groups -- and, to an ever-increasing extent in the present century, English groups. Some groups such as the Mission Metis have more particularly adhered to their French heritage, just as some non-status Indians in Fort Chipewyan readily think of themselves as French (Scollon and Scollon 1979 : 40) ; as has been seen already, this attitude is probably linked with a strong loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church, which has always associated with and emphasized the French aspect of mixed Native identity. Macro-ethnically speaking, this francophilia found national expression in 1914, when great numbers of Canadian Metis volunteered for World War I (De Trémaudan 1979 : 13, 388).

The concept of micro-ethnicity is an abstract sociological version

of Thompson's (1967 : 73) definition of a microculture -- "the biologically based, systematized creation of a small local community for the purpose of resolving its basic organic and social needs through generations, . . . built into the psychoneural systems of its human components and systematized by the activities of each individual." The concern for small-scale manifestations of cultural constructs that is inherent in these micro-level categories helps shed some light on the psychosocial identity of the Mission Metis and explain, for example, why it is that the traditional elements of the community frequently give hospitality to and strike friendships with socially deprived people with whom they seem to share common experiences. These individuals are mostly non-Mission Metis, but can also be of various European origins (e.g., Polish, German) ; as far as I have been able to observe, however, they never come from Indian or Anglo groups. This affinity of the Mission Metis with members of other non-institutionalized minority groups is strikingly parallel to the attitude of many Indians of the San Francisco Bay area in California, who seem to relate best to Chicanos and Hawaiians (Ablon 1964 : 302). Similarly, in Australian city centers those minority groups characterized by low socio-economic status align themselves with urban Aborigines (Kirk 1981 : 193). Clearly, an explanation in terms of solidarity within the "culture of poverty" would defeat its own purpose, as such a convergence of distinct minority groups is hardly diagnostic of socio-cultural apathy. The concepts of micro- and macro-ethnicity, on the other hand, allow for the existence of purposefulness and loyalty ties in the life of these people, and are therefore best suited for the study of minority groups and their interrelationships within the

larger world.

3.2. Toward a Holistic Model of Multilingual Competence. The Canadian Metis, as they expanded westward during and after the fur trade period, were a particularly mobile and vigorous rendition of the general Native adaptation to rapidly changing environmental circumstances. This adaptation was the outcome of a process of evolutionary change involving variation of propositions and selection of responses -- a quasi-biological situation (see Savage 1977 : 96ff). The present study, building on the ethnolinguistic premise that language is diagnostic of more general behavior, has made linguistic patterns the center of its focus. From this standpoint, linguistic variation (in terms of languages, dialects, or simply stylistic codes) is seen as indispensable to the maintenance and expression of diverse identities and personalities. It is a corollary of psycho-cultural variation, which determines the presence of overlapping and interreacting continua that maintain the flexibility of language through cultural expression and linguistic change. This situation allows for both distinctiveness and communication, and therefore favors the constructive exchange of differing structural and processual elements. The adaptive function of linguistic variation is manifested in its role as representation of the cultural dynamism which has for so long supplanted biological evolution in man. Rather naively, psychologists Bandler and Grinder (1979 : 52) contend that "evolutionarily the next step, which we are all engaged in, is multiple personality" : it is hoped that the present study has established that multiple personality is not a future, but a very old evolution, and that man's contextual response has become more refined as his linguistic

environment increased in complexity.

The study of the Mission Metis allows one to catch a glimpse of language production in a multilingual context. It must be borne in mind that multilingualism is the rule, rather than the exception, in speech communities of the world. Even if one does not wish to go as far as Rudnyckyj (1973 : 119), who claims that the capacity for multilingualism is what truly distinguishes human from non-human communication, it is nevertheless important to study the possible cognitive representation involved. Indeed, comprehension between different linguistic groups is possible only through at least a minimum of bilingualism : a bilingual person is necessary at some stage to break the circularity of semantics (viz., there is no point in the vocabulary of a language from which one can derive the meaning of the rest) by interpreting first the area of cultural overlap, and then the remainder of the lexicons involved (see Lyons 1968 : 410, 434).

In this way incipient bi- or multilingualism permits both communication and identification : communication depends on the correct phonemic projection of selected strings of lexical items, which ensures a minimum of intelligibility ; identification depends on the purely phonetic quality of the phonemic output, and determines the allophones characteristic of an outside group ("accent"). Confirmed multilingualism involves a complex network of interference, the most conspicuous manifestation of which is code-switching, a phenomenon considered by Diebold (1968 : 237) to be "highly adaptive functionally," and by Sankoff and Poplack (1981) to be a positive, if still somewhat obscure, development of multilingual competence. In terms of Whitaker's

(1976 : 51) three neurolinguistic levels (1 : cognition ; 2 : linguistic patterning ; 3 : speech production/perception), the distinction between code-switching and code-mixing made in Chapter 4 allows one to place the former at levels 1 and 2, and the latter at level 3. As a result, it appears that :

(i) code-switching bears on the context of discourse, is a marker of overall linguistic ability, and derives from creative and volitional language functions ;

(ii) code-mixing bears on involvement, is a marker of surface patching, and derives from mechanisms of speech production.

The higher mental functions attendant on the characteristics of multilingualism are themselves the product of a constant socio-historical development which entrains the cognitive activity (Luria 1980 : 29). Cognition is thus best viewed not as a property of the brain, but as a process (Cole and Scribner 1974 : passim). In this way only can we account for the performance-channeled outcome of a common human capacity resting on neurological structures which govern language as part of the cognitive process ; the latter then differs only qualitatively among age, ethnic, or social groups. A holistic model of multilingual competence must take these observations into consideration. We do not want just another noetic construct, but one which at least does not conflict with known neurolinguistic trajectories : as Haugen (1956 : 69) once remarked, the locus of multilingualism is ultimately in the human mind ; and language, as part of the overall system of human consciousness, is an epiphenomenon based on complex cerebral activity.

In terms of general neurolinguistic theory, what has been presented

so far is a description of the Mission Metis' peripheral language system in its verbal and auditory manifestations (see Whitaker 1971 : 41). We must now try to characterize the central language system responsible for multilingual production. Such an endeavor seems to be within the effective range of Darnell and Vanek's Human Communication Paradigm (Darnell 1978 ; Vanek 1979a, 1979b), which states that "language is not an abstract structure but a means of communication which is significant only in context of interaction" (Darnell 1978 : 288). This definition meets the wishes of the sociolinguists of the 1960's, who predicted that sociolinguistics would some day become linguistics at large and thus "preside over its own liquidation" (Hymes 1974 : 206).

Recalling that the ethnolinguistic study of a Metis group requires an analysis both horizontal and vertical (i.e., bearing both on synchronic multilingualism and diachronic change), I propose to conclude with a schematic variation on the holistic model of communication presented in Darnell (1978). In the present version (see Figure 5), the semantic base of linguistic competence comprises the general knowledge derived from the culture-free logico-mathematical thinking specific to man, as filtered and channeled through the configurational sets of a particular culture. The option of multilingualism is accounted for by a diasystem (Anttila 1972 : 292), through which the speaker derives his codes from a master lexicon (Forster 1978) opening onto three peripheral access files :

access 1 : concerns phonological properties and listening ;

access 2 : concerns syntactic/semantic properties and discourse ;

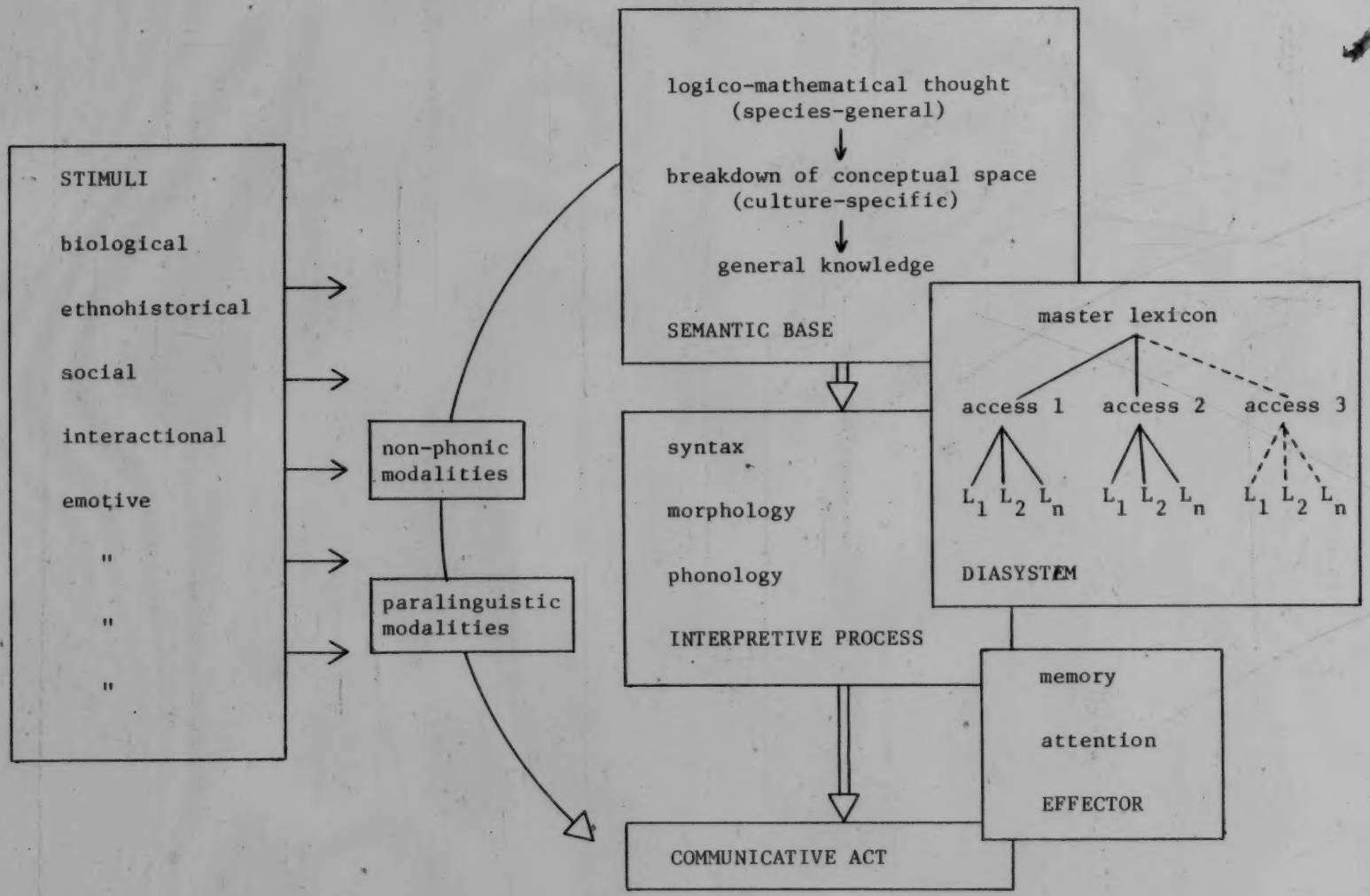


Figure 5 : Holistic Model of Multilingual Competence

access 3 : concerns orthographic properties and the optionally developed reading/writing skills.

Each access file covers an indefinite number of languages L_1, L_2..., L_n, which are available simultaneously to the speaker. Under the constant pressure of stimuli (biological, ethnohistorical, etc) producing situation variables, the semantic base is channeled through the interpretive process (i.e., the grammar) of the language selected via the diasystem. When outside stimuli continue to affect the interpretive process, there may occur code-switching (deep-structure phenomenon : syntax) or code-mixing (surface-structure phenomenon : morphology and phonology).

The final output of the interpretive process is transformed into a communicative act after passing through an effector module of memory and attention (Whitaker 1971 : 45), which imposes discourse limitations in response to psychobiological phenomena resulting in fatigue, lapses of memory, slips of the tongue, etc. These general linguistic modalities are necessarily accompanied by paralinguistic (intonation) and non-phonic (gestures, proxemic strategies) modalities.

* * * * * * * * *

This model of multilingual competence purports to explicate the generating of linguistic economies such as that of traditional Mission Metis. When along the age continuum a triad $[L_1, L_2, L_3]$ becomes first a dyad $[L_1, L_2]$, then a monad $[L]$, there is no "impoverishment" of the type described by Bloomfield (1928 : xii) for partly acculturated Menomini, and deplored by Vaszolyi (1976 : 1) for young Aboriginal fringe dwellers. In my experience, multilingual attrition is normally

balanced by an increasing complexity in the stylistic layers of the surviving language(s) ; so that it seems unrealistic to talk about a breakdown in linguistic, cognitive, or cultural competence when one witnesses the diminution of a linguistic repertoire. A very deep acquaintance with the culture or subculture concerned is required before one can pronounce a verdict of cultural or linguistic deprivation.

The Mission Metis are undergoing a transition from a linguistic economy characterized by three single-coded languages to one characterized by one multicoded language : their loss is thus simply one of cultural diversity, not of overall ability. It is hoped that further ethnolinguistic studies of multilingual communities will help confirm this conclusion.

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